

# EAST LYNNE



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HARDING  
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DRAMA of A  
Woman Who  
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### Cast of Characters

Lady Isabel	Ann Harding
Robert Carlyle	Conrad Nagel
Captain Francis Levison	Clive Brook
Cornelia Carlyle	Cecelia Loftus
Lord Mount Severn	O. P. Heggie
Sir Richard Hare	David Torrence
Barbara Hare	Flora Sheffield
Jayne	Beryl Mercer
Dudman	J. Gunnis Davis
William	Ronald Cobby

Adapted from the Fox Picture based on the novel by Mrs. Henry Wood. Directed by Frank Lloyd. Fictionized by Arline De Haas.

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# East Lynne

## Chapter I

THE warm noon sun . . . June sun . . . laid  
t'ight, caressing fingers over the old city  
of London.

In St. Paul's Cathedral, Robert Carlyle rose  
from the white, satin pillow upon which he had  
been kneeling before the bishop, drawing with  
him the girl who had knelt beside him. He  
kissed her upturned lips tenderly and then  
placed her hand within his arm. Isabel Vane,  
daughter of Mount Severn, newly created  
Isabel Carlyle, glanced shyly at this man who  
was now her husband. And then they turned  
to face the long nave. The maid-of-honour  
thrust a massive bouquet of white roses and  
lilies-of-the-valley into the bride's hands.

She walked through the sifting sunlight, rosy  
hued . . . walked between the wide banks of white,  
white roses and maidenhair fern that tapestried

walls and pillars . . . walked towards the noon-  
day, towards life, and love, and happiness.

Not until they had arrived at her own home,  
and she was once more in the familiar sur-  
roundings of the charming old rooms of the  
Mount Severn town house in Mayfair did  
Isabel seem to rouse herself. Then the gay,  
laughing, chattering crowds brought back to  
her a sense of reality.

"May your father be the first to offer his  
blessings, my child?"

Mount Severn took his daughter's hands and  
kissed her cheek.

Crinolines swinging, curls bobbing, a group  
of the bridesmaids, filmy and frothy in yards of  
pink tulle and satin, swarmed about the bride.

MOUNT SEVERN edged to the outskirts  
of the crowd and pushed his way  
through to the punch bowl and the buffet.  
Many eyes turned to watch the progress of one,  
famous because of the name he bore; no-  
torious for the manner in which he had  
dissipated the family fortune.

"Did you hear that?" Christopher  
Holmes, an elderly man with  
white hair and bushy sideburns  
propped himself against the  
elaborately carved mantel-  
piece in the drawing room  
and turned to his com-  
panion.

"Hear what?" A jovial  
voice boomed in answer.

"Hear Mount Severn,  
there, giving Isabel his  
blessing!" Holmes  
sniffed. "Well, it's about  
the only thing he has  
left to give her. He had  
to rent this old home of  
his for the reception."

"What! Really! Not as  
bad as that!"

"Absolutely! This house was  
taken over by creditors a month  
ago. I don't think Isabel knows it.

Isabel Vane glanced shyly at this man who was  
now her husband. A tumultuous feeling arose  
within her



They walked between the wide banks  
of roses and maidenhair fern that  
tapestried walls and pillars . . . walked  
toward life, and love, and happiness.

Mount Severn persuaded the hounds to hold  
off—for a consideration—until the wedding was  
over. And this was the last bit he had left. He'll  
be living off his friends for the rest of his life."

ISABEL'S cheeks were flushed, her color came  
and went, leaving trails of delicious pink  
across the whiteness. There was something so  
gay, so happy, so carefree about her every move-  
ment—something almost childlike. She seemed  
scarcely old enough, sedate enough, to be Isabel

Carlyle. Her beauty and glory touched everyone!  
"Ah, well!" Lord Denchester puffed and  
blew again. "But he did give her beauty . . .  
no denying that!"

"After all, he's nothing but a country solicitor  
who's made money. He's probably got a future.  
But with a family like the Mount Severn's . . ."

"Yet it wasn't a marriage-for-money?"  
"Not at all. Purely a love-match. They met  
at Lady Townsend's. Carlyle was doing some  
legal work for Townsend, and after that . . ."



"May your father be the first to offer his blessings, my child?"

color arose at the sight of Levison.

Francis was bowing low over her hand, and she was looking down at the sleek brown hair that waved back from the temples.

"May I—"  
Levison began.

"I was wondering if you were going to be the last," Isabel returned lightly, and was glad that her voice did sound so light.

LEVISON looked at her; kept looking at her. Then, finally: "It's not an

easy task, I can assure you."  
"Oh!" Isabel's arched eyebrows raised.

"But I won't say that London won't be the same without you," he declared. "No, I'll change it. I'll say life won't be the same without you. I'm hoping that you won't find life in the country too quiet."

She felt Levison looking at her and her words came hurriedly. "Oh, no... no, I won't. You'll see! I'm going to move Mayfair down to East Lynne. I'll be running up to town... and, oh, there'll be all sorts of things..."  
Levison nodded. "Well, that'll be splendid. Ah, how are you, Carlyle!"

"Well, Levison," Carlyle shook hands. "Are you offering Isabel congratulations or condolences?"

Levison laughed. "I'm wishing you both every happiness."  
"Thank you," Carlyle bowed.

"It's understood," she heard Robert saying, "that when we return from our honeymoon we're expecting you to visit us at East Lynne. I think you'll like the place."

"That's kind of you, but I'm leaving for the continent tomorrow. I'm off on a mission for Lord Townsend, and it may be months before I return. I can't tell."

"Months or years, you'll always be welcome," Carlyle answered heartily.

## Chapter II

"Sorry to interrupt, you know." The fussy voice of Mount Severn interjected into the conversation. "But I must remind you, my boy," he put his hand on Carlyle's arm, "you've got to catch the boat train, and there's very little time left to change..."

"Oh, Father!" Isabel caught her veil about her. "Thanks! We must hurry. She turned and held out her hand to Levison. "Goodbye," she said demurely. Her eyes rose to his.

Levison took the outstretched hand. "Good-bye, Isabel. And happiness, always!"  
He gazed fixedly after her lovely form.

THE long English twilight stretched luxuriously over wood, hill and lush meadow-land.

On and on they drove, every hoof beat, every turn of the carriage wheel bringing them nearer and nearer to East Lynne. Italy had been lovely for her honeymoon, but this was England. She was going to be so happy here, Isabel decided; so very happy. She'd do anything in her power to keep that happiness for herself and for Robert. Nothing could come between them.

"I was wondering if you were going to be the last," Isabel said lightly, and was glad that her voice could sound so light.





"Robert . . . Robert!" Isabel drew him closer to her. "Every time I come down his stairway, I shall remember how happy I am at this moment."



"That's The Grove, Richard Hare's place," Robert was pointing to a lovely old house that stood far back from the road. . . . He broke off suddenly to gesture towards a long avenue of oaks that was opening wide before them. "We're here, my dear! This is East Lynne!"

ISABEL sat up erect and looked about, exclaiming. The old, weather beaten trees formed an arch overhead. Hedges of hawthorne and blackthorne bordered the pasturelands that ran back from either side of the road. A tiny brook babbled over stones, sounding louder and louder as the carriage approached a rustic bridge. Here the scenery took on a wilder, less cultivated air, and tangles of bramble and wild roses sprang from the craggy sides of a steep, narrow ravine. The sound of water was heard.

"See, there's a fall of water," Carlyle was pointing out. "It's quite deep, but there's a little flight of steps cut into the stone so that you can walk down to the brook. It's cool here, even on the warmest days. And there . . . now, now you can see the house!"

From the midst of the sheltering trees set in a vast park Isabel could glimpse the rising gables of the old manor house. Tidy, trim lawns ran down as far as the bridge.

"OH! I never dreamed that East Lynne was like this. It's beautiful . . . beautiful . . . beautiful!"

"I've always felt it needed one crowning touch of beauty," Carlyle smiled. "And you have contributed that." He jumped to the ground and held out his hand.

Isabel arose, stepped out of the carriage, still gazing about her as though she would impress every feature of the house on her mind.

Up the steps they went. Then they were in the great, paneled hall. And there, in the corner, stood a middle-aged woman, a shawl gathered about



"Remember, Cornelia, Isabel is my wife!"

And now Isabel was the mistress of this house. She must oversee its management. But how? How was it to be done?



Outwardly she seemed composed enough . . . at least, she hoped that she was giving that impression.

her shoulders, her features dim in the faint light.

"Well, Cornelia!" Carlyle dropped his wife's arm and went to greet his sister, kissing her. "It's nice to be home. This is my wife, Isabel. Isabel, this is my sister, Cornelia."

"How do you do?" Cornelia took Isabel's hand, making a prim, formal gesture. Isabel leaned forward as though to kiss her new sister-in-law, but drew back, a little chilled, a little frightened at the lack of response.

"I've been looking forward to meeting you, Cornelia," she said, instead. "We were so disappointed that your illness prevented you from attending our wedding. I do hope you're feeling better. Robert tells me that you are . . . from your letters, you know."

"THANK you, I am better." The voice was stiff and unbending. "I hope you will like East Lynne. I've arranged your rooms as I thought you would like them."

"That's very kind and thoughtful of you, I'm sure," Isabel returned in a very sweet manner.

"If . . . if I may," she stammered, holding Carlyle's arm tightly. "I . . . I'd like . . ."

"Of course, dear. Run along," Carlyle patted her hand. "I know you're anxious to see your rooms."

The swish of Cornelia's skirts, as she slowly ascended the beautifully carved oaken staircase seemed to be the only live sound in the entire house. It was dead . . . dead. Isabel's fingers clutched at her throat for a moment, and then the warming pressure of Robert's hand on hers brought her to herself again. They were standing on the stairway, and Robert was saying something.

"You know," and now his voice was clearer, plainer. "It gives me the most exquisite pleasure, seeing you standing on these stairs. The first recollection I have of my mother was seeing her come down these stairs, radiantly beautiful, just as you are now. I shall always remember you standing here."

"Robert . . . Robert!" Isabel threw her arms

about her husband's neck and kissed him. She laughed. "And every time I come down this stairway, I shall remember how happy I am at this moment."

"You are beautiful, Isabel. My dear, I love you . . . love you!"

Robert turned and went down the stair. Cornelia accompanied Isabel upstairs. She swept past the waiting maid and entered a huge, darkened room. Heavy, carved furniture stood stiffly, each piece in its proper place. Floor-length hangings of heavy plush concealed the deep windows. The maid closed the door and stood inside, waiting. In this oppressive gloom Isabel felt all her formless dread returning. Cornelia turned suddenly.

"THIS is Joyce," Cornelia said flatly, gesturing toward the servant. "She will be your maid."

Cornelia showed her the bedroom. It was large, as stuffy and as dismal as the sitting room.

With a quick gesture Isabel pulled off her hat and jacket and threw them onto a chair. Then she took a deep breath.

"You know," she smiled, "this is really the most marvelous place to give house parties."

She waited, but no answer came. "I've asked a number of people down for the week-end. Some very charming people . . . I'm sure you'll like them . . . and I do hope you don't mind."

"Really!" Cornelia carefully picked up the hat and coat so carelessly flung aside, and just as carefully turned and handed them to Joyce who went to the wardrobe and put them in place, and then disappeared down the corridor.

And now Isabel was the mistress of this house. She must oversee its management, attend to the servants, order things. But how? How was it to be done? She had never managed a household. Most of her life had been spent in the home of Lady Townsend, under the tutelage of a governess, or traveling on the continent.

If only she had someone like Lady Townsend to turn to, to help her. It wouldn't take long to learn, but to try to turn to Cornelia for help or sympathy! And then, perhaps, Cornelia would think that the management was being taken out

of her hands. Perhaps Cornelia would resent it. Oh, if Robert would only come and help her!

"I . . . you know," she began at last, "I'm getting a little frightened. I . . . I've never managed a household. And I'm afraid I shall muddle things terribly."

CORNELIA cleared her throat. "I have always managed East Lynne for my brother," she declared tonelessly. "In fact, I practically brought him up, and I know how he likes things done. I know how to do them."



them back into their accustomed folds with the palm of her capable hand. She started towards the door.

"I must see that Robert's luggage has been taken care of," she nodded briefly. "I'm sure that Joyce will see that you have whatever you want." And without more ado she was gone.

"Your dresses, milady," Joyce was saying. "If I may make so bold, they're beautiful. I've started to unpack them."

Isabel turned, smiling. "Do you like them, Joyce?"

"I've never seen any so beautiful in this house before, milady, that I haven't."

"Now, come, I must hurry. Which dress shall I wear? I'll tell you what, Joyce," Isabel prattled, "I'll wear the one you like best!"

"Oh, milady!" Joyce turned to the bed where she had laid out several gowns and lovingly fingered a creation of heavy cream satin with great bunches of pink brocade roses. "This one, I'd like to see you in this!"

"Then that's the one it shall be. Come along!" Isabel sped across the room, dropping clothes right and left, the bad moments of the past forgotten, the future still before her.

A pang of jealousy shot through Isabel. Perhaps Robert was in love with Barbara . . .

### Chapter III

"Oh . . . Oh, yes, of course!" Isabel faltered. "Won't you, I mean . . . you wouldn't mind, then, continuing in charge?"

"If you wish it."

"I do. I do, indeed!"

Isabel leaned against the framework, staring out over the peaceful hills and meadows. She thought she detected a muffled sniff.

"If you'll excuse me," Cornelia was saying.

"Oh, yes, I'm so sorry," Isabel apologized.

"But I do love the English twilight." She stepped away from the window.

Cornelia pulled the drapes to and pressed

CORNELIA CARLYLE went over Robert's luggage, saw that things were in proper order, and then swished down the stairs to meet her brother in the hall.

"I've attended to your luggage for you, Robert," she announced stiffly. "It's being unpacked in your old room." She turned as though to go into the drawing room.

Carlyle laid a restraining hand on her arm. "I say, Cornelia, aren't you going to . . . to say anything about my wife?"

Cornelia shook her head, raised her eyebrows. "What do you expect me to say?" she asked



sharply. "You know my feeling regarding your marriage."

"It was certainly very embarrassing when you refused to attend my wedding."

"I couldn't do it honestly."

"There was no reason whatsoever for your refusal. I made the usual excuses of illness, but it wasn't very pleasant. Frankly, Cornelia, I don't understand your attitude."

Cornelia looked at her brother thoughtfully, rubbing her hands together beneath her shawl as though she were cold. Finally she spoke.

"Robert, I know you think I'm just prejudiced. But I'm not, and you'll find it out, all in good time. You've married a social butterfly."

"I THINK you're exaggerating things," Carlyle looked at his sister as though trying to read her mind.

"I don't think so," Cornelia shook her head.

"If you could view the matter as an outsider you would realize that there is a great deal of truth in what I say. Why, she's already planning to fill this house with her friends. There'll be gay parties every week-end."

"If we do nothing but entertain, everything... everything I've planned for you will be upset..." Cornelia hesitated, then went on, "Your parliamentary career, nothing must happen to that, Robert."

"Is that what's worrying you, Corney?" Carlyle laughed. "Isabel will want that for me as much as I do myself."

"She may want it for you," Cornelia said grimly, "but she's not the sort of woman to help you to get it."

"I don't know why not," Carlyle's voice was sharp. "You may have had other ideas in your mind concerning my marriage..."

Cornelia stopped her brother with a gesture. "Please believe me, Robert, when I tell you that I have never wanted to interfere in any way with whatever marriage you might make. But her life, everything she has known, is in London, in towns," Cornelia protested. "You were brought up here."

"LET'S not go over all that again, Cornelia. Isabel is my wife, now. Won't you try to be kind to her... to make her feel at home? It will mean a great deal to her if you'll

Isabel felt a distinct chill pass through her. She wanted so to have Cornelia like her.



do that. And in time, I'm sure you'll grow to love her."

"Very well, Robert. I shall do my best to like her." With a swish of her skirts Cornelia turned and then sailed off towards the regions of the pantry.

Slowly Carlyle walked across the hall and went upstairs to his room to change into dinner clothes.

After all, Cornelia had been both mother and father to him. Ever since he could remember she had taken care of him. It was only natural that she should feel interested, even responsible for him, as a parent feels responsible for a child. He could have wished that she might have accepted Isabel a little more gracefully however.

A slight noise, a rustling in the doorway, made him look up quickly. There stood Isabel, radiant in the candle light, her soft golden hair with its clinging curls caressing her slender throat, her cheeks flushed, her bare arms milk-white, her fingers demurely intertwined. Jewels gleamed on her neck and wrists. It wasn't often, and certainly not recently that East Lynne housed such a dazzling creature.

With a laugh Carlyle caught her in his arms and held her, kissing the red mouth, the closed eyelids, the smooth, cool forehead, the little hollow of her throat.

"Oh, my dear, my dear," he said at last, holding Isabel at arm's length and gazing at her tenderly. "It's a

dream come true! Having you here, in my arms... you, the mistress of East Lynne."

"Robert my darling!" Gently she smoothed the lapel of his dinner coat. "My... husband."

"Tell me," Carlyle questioned, solicitously.

"How do you like everything at East Lynne?"

"Oh, Robert, there isn't a thing I'd change." And Isabel meant it, then.

THOSE brief moments with Cornelia when she had felt so miserable, so hurt, were forgotten.

"My maid's a dear," she rambled on. "You don't find maids like Joyce in London. She was so concerned with what I should wear, and so interested in my clothes. She even selected this dress for me to put on tonight. She wanted to see me in it," Isabel laughed.

"Well, then," and Carlyle laughed, too, "I'd suggest that you allow Joyce to select



"Now, come, Joyce, I must hurry. Which dress shall I wear?"

all your gowns. I think you look almost more beautiful than ever . . . if that were possible."

"My darling! It's nice to have a husband who can make such pretty speeches."

"It's nice to have a wife who deserves them." Carlyle pressed her hand. He paused, and then went on. "Oh, yes, the Hares will be over for dinner this evening. You remember, Richard and Barbara . . . I pointed out their home to you this afternoon. Perhaps it is better to have some company. It won't make you feel so isolated . . . Cornelia seems to think that you may be lonely here, at first. That's probably why she asked them over."

"Oh, I'm sure it is," Isabel nodded. She was feeling happy enough now to believe that Cornelia had honestly tried to do something for her comfort.

"What a lovely old piano!" Isabel exclaimed, her attention caught by the gleaming rosewood of a grand piano. "I want to try it!"

She ran to the instrument and seated herself before it, running her fingers over the keys. She sang "Then You'll Remember Me," from the opera, "The Bohemian Girl":

"When other lips and other hearts,

Their tale of love shall tell."

Carlyle stared fascinated at the smooth, white throat that fluttered as the notes rolled forth; at the red, arched lips as they formed the words. "Well, well! The bride and groom! Hullo—hullo!"

A deep bass voice blasted the intervening space between the door and the piano, and a bulky form came striding towards the engrossed pair.

"Well, my boy, this is an occasion! Welcome home!"

"Isabel, may I present Mr. Richard Hare? Richard, my wife, Isabel," Carlyle was saying.

"May you indeed," Sir Richard boomed. "My dear," he turned to Isabel, "this is my daughter, Barbara."

"I'm delighted to meet you, Isabel," Barbara shook hands smiling.

"THANK you. I've heard so much about you," Isabel returned the smile. "We're neighbors, so I'm hoping that we'll see you often."

At first meeting she rather liked this Barbara. She seemed a quiet, shy girl, with soft brown hair and clear, hazel eyes.

"We do hope you'll like East Lynne," Barbara put in in her soft, sweet voice.

"Well, East Lynne likes you already," Sir Richard assured Isabel.

"Thank you, that's very kind."

"Come along to the library, Richard," Carlyle suggested. "We'll leave Barbara and Isabel to discuss us."

"Right, my boy, right!" Sir Richard seized Carlyle's arm and hustled towards the door.

There was talk of stock shows and fairs, church bazaars and poor Mrs. Cullin's rheumatism and should chickens with the pip be fed on warm milk. And controversies over people, none of whom Isabel knew. Then Carlyle and Sir Richard lingered over their port, and Barbara and Cornelia showed Isabel some old photographs of Robert.

It was amusing for a while, looking at these funny old pictures of Robert; listening to little anecdotes of his life. Barbara seemed to know as many as Cornelia. A pang of jealousy seized Isabel. Perhaps Robert was in love with Barbara.

She stood in the hallway with Cornelia while Robert saw the Hares to their carriage.

Isabel turned to Cornelia and said: "Miss Hare seems to be a very charming girl."

Cornelia nodded. "My brother was very fond of her," she announced dispiritedly. "They've known each other since childhood."

Isabel sighed. That fact had been made obvious during the evening. "How interesting!"

"Yes!" And Cornelia's voice seemed to carry a little warmth. "Barbara seems to understand my brother as I do. I've always felt that his wife should be in absolute sympathy with him. Here's Robert now. Good night." Abruptly she turned and left.

So that was it. Cornelia had wanted Robert to marry Barbara. Barbara, who knew and understood him. He needed a wife who'd be in sympathy with him. Well, Robert hadn't married Barbara. And she, Isabel, would do everything in her power to show Cornelia that she was the proper wife for Robert.

#### Chapter IV

ISABEL sat before the mirror in her bedroom and stared at the person who looked back at her with clear blue eyes. It was three now, she reflected . . . three years since she had come as a bride to East Lynne. Was she changed? How had she changed? She tried to visualize the happy, laughing girl who had been, three years ago, Isabel Vane.

What had happened? Isabel frowned as she stared at her reflection. Where were all the house parties she had visualized; all the little trips to London with Robert, seeing her friends again. Why, she suddenly realized with a start, she hadn't seen any of her London friends for . . . how long was it? Two years . . . no, almost three.

Of course, there had been the baby, and she had stayed very much at home before its advent, and afterwards she seemed to be caught up in the routine of innumerable, tiny things. Could it actually be three years ago that she walked up the nave of St. Paul's Cathedral on Robert's



"Oh, my dear, my dear, it's a dream come true! Having you here in my arms . . .!"

arm? Her mind raced back, recalling the past.

Yes, it was three years, there was no getting away from that. Then, how had this change taken place. Cornelia was always having an attack of headache when anything was suggested. And then Robert was forever busy. He really couldn't take her to London with him. He had so much to attend to, and was too anxious to cut his stay in town short and hurry back to East Lynne.

CORNELIA still retained her right to manage affairs for her brother. The servants deferred to her; went to her for their orders. And through it all Robert had said nothing. He didn't seem to notice. He was forging

ahead in his career as a barrister. He was comfortable.

Her little boy, William was her sole comfort. She started toward the stairway, thinking to find the baby and romp with him for a bit.

As she went downstairs the sound of voices coming from the drawing room caught her ears. She pressed her hand to her mouth. She had forgotten! The vicar of East Lynne, his wife and several members of the Ladies' Guild had been invited for tea and a conference concerning the forthcoming Charity Bazaar. She must make an appearance. If she didn't there would be comments dropped, suggestions made.

Patting her hair and smoothing the lace collar at her neck, Isabel pushed open the door of





The baby's soft warm body snuggled closer to her. She crushed the child to her. How could she think of leaving him!

slight bow which included the entire group about him, "suggestions are in order."  
"The bazaar last year was dignified and decorous," Cornelia pronounced. She looked about as though awaiting any contradiction. But none was forthcoming. "I think we could not do better," she went on, then, "than to follow the same general line."  
There was a nodding of heads, a unanimous agreement.

"Have you any ideas on the subject, Lady Isabel?" the vicar asked, glancing first at Cornelia as though not quite certain of himself.

THERE was a pause. Isabel could feel all eyes turning toward her, watching her.  
"I'd like to suggest," she began

the big, long room. A group of elderly women were gathered about the tea table, Cornelia in their midst.

"It was imperative for my brother to go to London," Isabel heard Cornelia addressing the aged, white haired vicar who leaned against the mantelpiece, a cup of tea balanced in his hand. "He regretted very much that he could not be here."

ISABEL went steadily into the room. The vicar was the first to note her arrival.

"Ah!" he murmured, "good afternoon, Lady Isabel."

The women about the tea table looked up, nodding their greetings. But there was no one of them who made a really friendly gesture. They spoke, and were ready to return to the business at hand.

"We were just discussing the forthcoming bazaar," the vicar explained politely. "The details are as yet more or less chaotic. Now," he made a

If Isabel had thrown a bomb into their midst she could have caused no more confusion.



timidly, "that we make the bazaar a little more attractive for the young people. They might enjoy a little gaiety . . . a dance . . . a masquerade . . ."

If she had thrown a bomb into their midst Isabel could have caused no more confusion.

"My dear lady," the vicar frowned, embarrassed, "Anything of that sort would violate custom and tradition. I'm certain Mr. Carlyle would never . . ."

He stopped lamely, not knowing quite how to continue. I might have known it. . . . I might have known it, Isabel reminded herself. Her eyes felt misty with tears and she was



"Francis Levison! This is a surprise! I'm delighted to see you again!"

afraid that she was going to cry. Terrible, to be a stranger still in one's own home.

"If it is the wish of the members present," Cornelia broke the silence in a cold, hard tone of voice, "that I take charge this year as I have done in the past, I shall be glad to do so."

"Why, of course . . . Everything went so nicely last year . . . We couldn't do better . . . I'm certain, Cornelia, you'll make a success . . . Most decidedly . . . That will be best . . ."

IN the midst of it all, Isabel rose and placed her cup on the tea table. "You will excuse me, please." She turned and fled across the room, out of the door, and into the quiet, enveloping safety of the gloomy hall.

Well, she had tried . . . tried as she had so many times before. And nothing had ever come of her trying. Matters went along in their usual routine as though she had never existed. She'd go and find William, her little son.



Across the lawn she sped until she saw the white cap and apron of Joyce and a big fur robe spread on the grass. She stopped and held out her arms.

"William!" she called. "William!"

The bulky little form of a two-year-old made wriggling movements and then the child gained his feet. His face was one wide, beaming smile. Isabel caught him up in her arms. He gurgled something that sounded like "bear."

"O-o-o-o! So you want to play bear, do you?" Isabel laughed. "All right. Mummy will be the big mamma bear, and you'll be the little baby bear."

Joyce made a little sound in her throat. "Beggin' your pardon, milady," she bobbed, "but Miss Cornelia's forbidden Master William to play bear."

ISABEL frowned, biting her lip. Then: "Why, Joyce?"

"Well, milady, you see his clothes were torn yesterday . . ."

"Oh, that doesn't matter, Joyce," Isabel laughed. "I ordered some new ones for him from London last week."

"I—I'm sorry, milady," Joyce hesitated painfully as though she hated to say what she had to say. "But Miss Cornelia's countermanded that order."



So this was what happened in East Lynne, had, evening after

Isabel stared uncomprehendingly at the maid. Slowly the meaning of the words penetrated her mind. Cornelia had countermanded an order she had given . . . had told her nothing of it. Yet she had told the servants. It was monstrous! Monstrous! She felt shamed and humiliated.

What was she to do? She loved Robert, she loved her home. And there was William. She crushed the child to her. If she should leave her home . . . leave her husband. No! No! She put the thought from her as though it were a poisoned thing. The baby's soft, warm hands caught at her

"Aren't you a bad boy?" But her voice was full of love, rather than of chiding.



Levison told himself. This was what Isabel evening, day after day.

cheek, at her neck, trying to draw her attention to himself.

"You darling! And who said we mustn't play bear?" She set the child on his feet, got down on all fours, and pulled the fur rug over herself.

"Now you run and hide! Quick!"

With a shout of glee the child scrambled for a tree trunk. The big, furry form came after him.

### Chapter V

CARLYLE flected the whip over the black backs of the two small trotters and set them to stepping high. They stepped smartly.

"I was quite pleasantly surprised, Levison, to find that you'd returned to England," he was saying. "Although I'm sorry that you had to return because of your uncle's death. But it would have been impossible for me to settle the estate without your presence."

"I don't mind telling you that I rather enjoy being in England again, after three years," Levison replied. "I've been on the continent from Paris to Berlin to Budapest and back again."

And Isabel? He wondered whether she had changed. What had East Lynne done to her?

"By the way, Isabel will be surprised, won't she?" Robert was saying.

It was as though he had almost read his thoughts, Levison told himself. For a moment it frightened him, and then very quietly he asked: "How is she?"

"She's in splendid health, thank you," Carlyle informed him. "The country seemed to agree with her from the very first. She thoroughly enjoys it, I believe."

"She must," Levison agreed. "I under-



"I'll wager you must have found some romances during your travels," said Isabel.



stand she hasn't been seen in London for the last two seasons."

"Oh, she hasn't time for that sort of thing any more," Carlyle laughed. "There's the child, you know. And the estate . . . the affairs of the parish. In fact, she's kept quite busy."

Levison sent a sharp glance towards his companion's face. Isabel, busy with a child, an estate, and the affairs of the parish! It sounded almost incredible.

He had been rather surprised when he had found that it was Carlyle who was settling up his uncle's estate. Surprised, and a little pleased. And he had very quickly accepted the invitation to spend a few days at East Lynne. That, at least, meant a sight of Isabel. And although he tried not to admit it, he realized that he had not forgotten her; and longed . . .

"How old is the baby?" he asked abruptly.

"NOT quite two years old. He'll be two the twenty-fifth of this month," Carlyle answered with a young father's proud air. "He's quite a good-sized boy. I think he looks exactly like his mother, but my sister, Cornelia, says he has the Carlyle nose and chin. He talks very plainly for a child of his age."

Levison smiled. "You are the doting parent, aren't you?"

"Well, here we are, Levison," Carlyle exclaimed.

"This is East Lynne."

Levison looked about, seeing the avenue of oak trees with the great

park and a glimpse of the house beyond. It was a beautiful situation, without doubt. But Isabel, buried here! Now he no longer wondered whether she had changed, but rather, how great that change had been.

Carlyle stepped out of the cart, throwing the reins over the dashboard. Levison noticed that he looked around as though seeking someone. But the entrance was deserted.

"COME right along," Carlyle invited. "The butler will see to your luggage."

"Thanks." Levison dismounted and went up the steps with his host.

Carlyle threw open a door, and from the room beyond came a murmur of voices which died abruptly as the master of the house entered with his guest.

"Cornelia, my dear, how are you?" Carlyle went to his sister and kissed her. "May I present Mr. Francis Levison? Mr. Levison, my sister, Miss Carlyle."

"How do you do, Miss Carlyle." Gravely Levison bowed. "I am most happy to make your acquaintance at last."

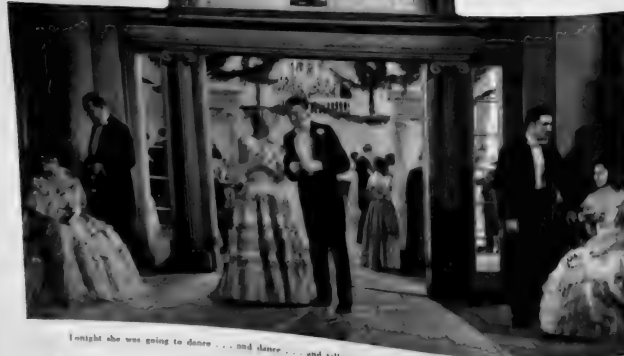
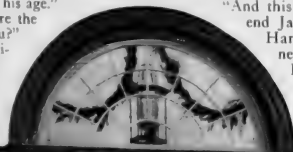
"Thank you," Cornelia nodded stiffly.

"And this is our Vicar, the Reverend James Hartledge, and Mrs. Hartledge." Carlyle made the necessary gestures while

Levison bowed.

"Where is Isabel?" he heard Carlyle questioning his sister.

"I believe she's in



Tonight she was going to dance . . . and dance . . . and talk nonsense . . . and be thoroughly and delightfully happy once again.

the garden," Cornelia answered austerely. And then, quickly, as if to divert attention, she asked: "Will you take tea, Mr. Levison?"

"If you please."

And Levison saw his host vanish.

"Isabel!" There was consternation, horror and dreadful severity concentrated in that one word.

"Oh! Robert, I'm sorry. But don't be cross, please don't," she begged. "And don't scold me. I'm so happy that you're home again." Impetuously she stood on tip-toe and kissed him. But there was no response, no answering kiss. "It's seemed such a long time without you. The days are endless when you're away. Did you have a nice time? What was London like? Did you see anyone?" Her questions came breathlessly.

"Isabel, I wish you would think just a little more of me, of my position," Carlyle said coldly, heedless of the questions. "I've brought a guest from London, Francis Levison."

"Francis Levison!" Isabel's voice rang out happily, her eyes shone. "Oh, my dear, how sweet of you. Oh, I'll be so glad to see him. Where is he?"

"HE'S in the drawing room at present, but . . ."

Like a child, Isabel was running across the lawn before Robert could reach out his hand to stop her. She burst into the drawing room, her hair flying, her dress grass-stained, her collar awry.

"Francis Levison! This is a surprise!" She went towards the man who arose and took her hand, pressing it. "I'm delighted to see you again! How are you? When did you arrive in London?"

"And I'm delighted to see you, Isabel."

"Have you met . . ." Isabel began, turning to Cornelia and the others. And then she realized what she had done. Her cheeks became scarlet, and in wild confusion she tried to arrange her collar, pat her hair.

"I . . . I'm . . . you must pardon my appearance," she stammered. "I've been romping with the baby . . . out there . . . on the lawn."

"I'm certain Mr. Levison will excuse you, my dear," Carlyle's voice came sharply from the open doorway.

"Of course." He gave Isabel's hand a pat



With something of the spirit of the Isabel Vane of old she defied conventions. She would go to the ball . . .

that was meant to reassure her, and the gesture was not lost on any person in the entire room. Isabel hurried into the hall, conscious of the silence that was there behind her; conscious of the tongues that were waiting to wag; conscious that all eyes were following her. Swiftly she ran up the stairs and went to her bedroom.

TEARS of anger, indignation, and chagrin welled into her eyes, spilling down over her cheeks. She began to sob.

She mustn't cry, now. It would only make her eyes red. And she wanted to look her best this evening. Wanted to look her best so that Francis should know that she was happy at



"When I first met you I realized that you were lovely... beautiful! But tonight! Tonight, you were more beautiful than I've ever seen you before."

sofa, Cornelia spread her voluminous skirts. Mrs. Hartledge on one side of her, Barbara on the other. Isabel wandered about like a butterfly looking for a flower upon which to alight, and finally seated herself at the piano. Her fingers ran lightly over the keys and soft little cadences of melody trembled through the room, like an accompaniment to the droning conversation of the women on the Chesterfield, to the harsher voice of Hare, the smooth tones of Carlyle.

Levison's eyes met Isabel's. She smiled and went on with her playing. Not a sign of any sort did she give.

SO this was what happened in East Lynne. Levison told himself. This was what Isabel had, evening after evening, day after day. This was the reason that her friends had fallen off, one by one. Carlyle himself was a good sort, but this Miss Cornelia!

Levison felt Isabel's gaze upon him. He realized that she had been watching him for a moment, and he prayed fervently that she could not read his thoughts. Surely she could realize to some extent his feelings.

The music trailed off slowly and Isabel rose. She came across the room, and stood before Levison smiling.

"I know you're dying for a smoke," she said softly. "Why don't you come out on the balcony?"

"Thank you," Levison heaved a deep sigh of relief. "You've rescued me from an early grave."

He crossed the room behind her and stepped out through the opened doors into the moonlit night. He took a cigar from his pocket, lighted it carefully, and sent a long curl of white smoke drifting lazily out into the darkness.

Isabel seated herself upon the wide balustrade

East Lynne... happy with Robert... with her baby.

## Chapter VI

LEVISON lounged in a corner of the room, his hands behind his back, surveying the company and thinking... thinking. Carlyle stood before the fireplace talking to Hare. The vicar and Tobey Mansfield, a friend of the Hares, had settled to a glass of port and a game of chess, and both white heads nodded drowsily before the board. On a Chesterfield

and stared silently out across the park. I hope the excitement of this evening won't be too much for you," she said at last. There was a slight tinge of sarcasm in her voice.

"Your husband tells me you like the country," he said suddenly. "We were talking of you this afternoon."

"Oh, I don't mind it," she returned, but the words didn't ring true. "I've grown quite used to the quietude of East Lynne. I have my baby, you know. And he keeps me rather busy. He's such a darling. You must see him tomorrow."

"I'd like to."

There was a slight pause. "I suppose, too, some of your friends run down from London occasionally," Levison broke the silence.

Isabel frowned. "Well, at first they did. And then, one by one..." She looked away as though hesitating to continue in her confession. Then her words came in a rush. "One by one they dropped away."

"I THINK I understand," Levison nodded. "But tell me about yourself. What have you been doing these last three years, Isabel? Does it seem that long to you? It seems three thousand years to me."

"But where have you been? What have you seen?"

"I've been almost everywhere... seen almost everything," Levison laughed. "But, like everything else, the diplomatic service becomes mere routine. I may be in the Balkans one month, and in Russia the next. I've spent quite a bit of time in Berlin and Budapest, and some in Paris. I've been to Turkey, Greece... all over the continent. But after a while one begins to long a little for familiar things, familiar language, familiar faces. You have a desire to come back to roast beef and Yorkshire

Suddenly she was in his arms. His lips were pressed to hers, crushing them. "Francis! Francis! Don't!" she moaned.

pudding. You can't live forever on Coupe de fruit de Champagne."

"And you can't live forever on roast beef and pudding," Isabel parried, and then wished she hadn't said that. "At any rate," she hurried on, "your days are not the same. And you must have had romance..."

"Romance? What do you mean?"

Isabel teased. "You've fallen in love a thousand times, I'll wager, if you'll only confess it."

"I've never fallen out of





love," Levison said abruptly. Isabel started. She knew what he meant. But she mustn't... she mustn't listen to him.

"Will you be in England long?" She spoke at random.

As though bowing to her will, Levison answered quietly. "No longer than it takes to settle my uncle's estate."

"Stay here for a few days. We'd be delighted to have you."

"THAT'S very kind of you, Isabel, but I'm afraid it would be an imposition."

"That's utter nonsense," Isabel shook her head. "It's been years since we've seen each other. I want to hear more about you... I want to hear the news of London. We have so few visitors. Surely, you'll stay? Oh, Robert!"

"Here you are!" Carlyle appeared in the doorway.

"I'm trying to persuade Francis to remain for

a few days," Isabel turned to her husband. "Perhaps you can help."

"Oh, but you must stay," Carlyle turned to his guest. "Of course, we can't offer very much entertainment, I'm afraid."

"But, my dear," Isabel turned impulsively to her husband, "you've forgotten the Hunt Ball."

"That sounds interesting," Levison agreed, more because he noted Isabel's evident delight at the mention of the ball than anything else.

"I'm sorry, dear," Carlyle said with an air of finality. "I forgot to tell you. I have to be in London on Tuesday trying a case in chancery."

"Oh!" There was hurt and pain in Isabel's cry. Something like the whimpering of a whipped animal.

"Will you excuse me, please?" In a second she had turned and vanished.

"It's too bad that I must disappoint her," Carlyle said, "but what can I do? It's vitally

"I'm sorry you had to hear about that from someone else," said Isabel. "I wanted to tell you myself."



With a pounding heart, Isabel realized that she could not leave East Lams without her precious baby. She closed the bag on her few possessions and then stole softly across the room to the nursery. If she had to face the world, she would always have the nearness of her baby to comfort her!

important that I try that case on Tuesday." "If I might make a suggestion," Levison began, "your sister undoubtedly would like to go. I'd be very glad to stay on here and to escort them both to the ball. Perhaps that might take off a little of the edge of disappointment." "That's a capital idea," Carlyle exclaimed heartily.

Isabel, looking neither to right nor to left, rushed up the stairs and to her room. She dabbed at her eyes with her lace handkerchief. It was cruel . . . cruel of Robert.

"Oh, milady, is something wrong?" Joyce came into the room, her eyes wide. "I . . . I heard you come to your room, milady. I thought perhaps you wanted me."

"No, I don't need you, Joyce. You may go."

"Very well, milady. But if you have time, I wish you'd look in the nursery. I can't get Master William to go to sleep somehow."

Isabel opened the nursery door. "You're a bad boy!" Isabel went to the child, holding out her arms. "Aren't you a bad boy?" But her voice was full of love, rather than chiding.

The child shook his curly head, and then put his arms about his mother's neck.

"Now, you lie down and go to sleep," Isabel commanded, placing the baby in the crib. "And shut 'em eyes . . . shut 'em tight. And padies under the covers!" She tucked in a pink hand.

She began to hum a fragment of a song. Bits of the words drifted out over the sleepy room.

*"When other lips and other hearts . . . Their tales of love shall tell . . ."*

She watched the child sinking rapidly into dreamland under the spell of her soft voice.

## Chapter VII

ISABEL stood before the pier glass, turning this way and that, surveying herself with critical approval. Tonight was the Hunt Ball. Tonight she was going to dance . . . and dance . . . and talk nonsense . . . and be thoroughly and delightfully happy once again.

She clasped her hands together and turned

once more to survey the short train that Joyce was so carefully draping. The new dress was perfect, she thought.

"Oh, Joyce," Isabel exclaimed for perhaps the tenth time in as many minutes, "you will promise to keep an eye on Master William, won't you? Don't let anything happen to him."



"I can stop you," her husband warned her.

"Don't you worry about him, milady. You just enjoy yourself. I'll take care of him. Oh, you'll have such a good time," she sighed. "I can just see you now—dancing with all the young men."

"Oh, Joyce, Joyce," Isabel laughed. "You do spoil me. But I know I'm going to have a good time. There, now, you may go. And please look in at Master William."

"Yes, milady," Joyce rose from her knees and proudly surveyed her mistress. "I'll go right away." She hurried from the room.

The door opened abruptly. Cornelia stood in the opening, a drab brown dressing gown clutched about her. Isabel stared at the grim apparition in bewilderment.

"I'm afraid we shall not be able to go to the ball."

"Not go to the ball?" Isabel caught her breath. Her mouth opened, her forehead wrinkled in bewilderment. "Not go to the ball," she repeated slowly.

"No, I'm sorry. I know how you've looked forward to this, but I'm entirely too ill," she answered flatly.

And without another word she turned and left the room, closing the door behind her.

Isabel stared at the closed door until she could feel the misty tears clouding her eyes. Not go to the ball! Why—why—why did Cornelia have to be ill on just this evening? Why did Cornelia have to have a headache?

SHE couldn't go without Cornelia, Isabel told herself. What would people say? What would they think? Of course, all the country round knew that Francis Levison was the house guest of the Carlyles. But that wouldn't stop jealous, catty tongues from wagging. Why, oh, why, did Cornelia have to have a headache?

Cornelia always had a headache when she didn't want to do something. Cornelia hadn't wanted to go to the ball. She didn't want Isabel to go to the ball—didn't want to do anything that might give her happiness. It was Cornelia—always Cornelia, who interfered. Well, she wouldn't keep her at home. She, Isabel, would go to the ball!

Her fingers trembling, Isabel picked up the diamond pendant and clasped it again about her neck. With something of the spirit of the Isabel Vane of old she rushed to the bed and donned the white ermine jacket that Joyce had carefully laid out for her. Yet perhaps she shouldn't go through with this. Perhaps . . .

"How lovely you look!" The sincerity of Levison's tone, the frank look of admiration in his eyes held Isabel spellbound.

"You're perfectly beautiful!" He took her hand. His eyes sought hers but she turned away.

"You forget that the law is on my side."

Isabel drew up a chair in front of her dressing table. As she gazed once more at her reflection in the pier glass she felt so happy, so gay. Her gown was a lovely cascade of lace.

They stood in the hall, the soft, mellow light all about them.

"Oh, Francis," Isabel began. "Cornelia's ill. She's got a headache. But I don't think she's really got a headache at all. She doesn't want me to go to the ball and she's using that as an excuse. But I want to go . . . I do want to go." Her words tumbled out haphazardly.

"If you want to go, I'll take you," Levison said quietly.

"That's very kind of you, Francis," Isabel's head rose higher and her chin took on a determined line. "We'll go."

Levison stopped to take his hat from the table, swung his long, satin-lined opera cape over his shoulders and offered his arm to Isabel.

Neither of the two said very much as the high-stepping horses pranced along the open road. The moonlight filtered through the leafy branches of the great trees and made patches of shimmering light on the dirt highway. Hedges of wild white roses lay like fairies' shrouds over the greenery. The air was sweet with the scents of a summer night.

The horses stopped before a doorway over which burned a big gas lamp. The groom jumped down from the box. A butler stood to one side, ushering in the guests.

There were introductions, and bows, and handshakings and then Isabel felt herself being drawn onto the dance floor. She was in Levison's arms. The lively rhythm of a polka made her feet like thistledown. She was floating on pink clouds. It was all like a delicious dream, and she wished that it could go on and on, and that she would never waken.

With no assistance from Levison her dance program was filled; even all the "extras" and encores were taken. Her favours were sought as though she were once again the old Isabel Vane attending a ball in Mayfair.

The light, the color, the gaiety went to her head like sparkling wine. It was good . . . good . . . good to be happy and free again. The ravishing hours fled all too soon. She was still laughing and chattering when Levison found her, to take her out on to the floor for the last waltz.

And then they were in the carriage again, wending their way homeward, weary but happy.

"Tired?" Levison spoke at last, breaking into her reverie.

ISABEL opened her eyes, looked up at the man beside her and smiled. "Tired?" she repeated, shaking her head. "Oh, no. But still bewitched . . . enchanted! Do you know, as I was dancing, time began to turn back very gradually and I was in Mayfair again."

"Dancing in a dream!" Levison said softly. "But such moments are not for me."

"Why?" she asked lazily.

"Because of the bitterness of the awakening." "I'm grateful for anything," she said softly.

They fell silent again. A still, hushed solemnity descended about them. They might have been driving up and up into the azure blue, sailing over enchanted islands.

"You know, as I watched you tonight I found I couldn't take my eyes off you," Levison said at last. "I've never seen such a change in anyone. When I first met you I realized that you were lovely . . . beautiful! But tonight! Tonight, you were more beautiful than I've ever seen you before."

Isabel looked up startled, a puzzled frown on her face.

"I hope I haven't offended you," Levison apologized.

Isabel laughed. "Offended me? Mercy, no. Keep right on talking."

"I would," and Levison laughed too, "but I believe we're home."

The carriage drew up before the main doorway of East Lynne.

### Chapter VIII

AS they waited there came a slight creaking of bolts and the door swung noiselessly on its hinges. There was a small crack, through which a glimpse of Joyce's capped head was vouchsafed them. Then the crack became wider.

"Oh, Joyce!" Isabel stepped into the hall, Levison behind her. "Thank you for waiting up for me. Is Master William all right?"

"Quite all right, milady," Joyce answered in a whisper. With a little bob of her head she silently disappeared.

Isabel led the way into the drawing room where the candles still flickered in their sockets, sending wavering shadows over the heavy, carved walnut furniture.

"Allow me," Levison began to remove Isabel's wrap, his fingers lingering caressingly on the soft, white fur, warm from its contact with arms and shoulders.

Levison removed his cap and hat.

"Did you enjoy the ball, Isabel?" he asked. "Oh, it was glorious!" Her eyes shone; once more the corners of her lips dimpled in happy reminiscence.

"You know, Isabel," he said as she took the jacket from him, "you've matured . . . you've become a woman. At first it seemed as though I were watching you change back into the girl you were. But it isn't that. You're much

deeper, much stronger, much lovelier than ever before. You're the loveliest woman I've ever seen."

Isabel laughed. "Really?" She placed the fur jacket over the arm of a wing chair. "And after all your adventures with continental beauties?"

"After all my adventures with continental beauties," Levison repeated seriously. "If you will insist that I've had adventures. Which I haven't. But after all my wanderings, after all the women I've met. I still think you're the loveliest."

He realized now, as never before, that he really loved Isabel. But he had never put his love into words. He hadn't spoken because he realized that his career, such as it was, was better made alone until he had become established.

But this evening as he had watched this beautiful woman, saw her in the arms of other men; gazed upon the full power of her radiant, matured splendour, he knew that he loved her as he would never love anyone else. And yet, how could he speak? She was another man's wife.

Isabel walked over to the long windows, pulled back the drapes, unloosed the catches, and threw open the windows. The moonlight streamed in upon her, lighting up her face, playing upon the gold in her hair. She took a deep breath, inhaling the fresh night air. The thrumming of insects, the chirping of crickets, broken intermittently by the deep basso of a frog, sounded loud and clear in the midst of the stillness.

"WHAT a glorious night!" Isabel spoke softly, almost to herself.

"It is magnificent," Levison said quietly.

"A night for dreams. It's all a dream!"

"No! No! I won't have it that way!"

Isabel returned passionately. "It's not a dream at all! It's real. I'm in London again. Goodness me! What have I to do tomorrow? There's a luncheon at Lady Townsend's . . . a reception later at Lord Trevor's. Perhaps I shall see Francis Levison . . . the fascinating Francis Levison. I hope so . . ." Her voice trailed off.

"Charming, my dear. Perfectly charming," Levison applauded.

Together they stared out

over the park. The old chestnut trees with their white torches of blossoms gleamed silver in the night. Tiny petals trembled, and went fluttering to the ground like snow.

"You know," Levison said suddenly, "it reminds me of a night at Richmond three years ago." He turned to look at the woman beside him. "I wonder if you remember?" he questioned softly.

Isabel hesitated, then nodded. "Yes, I remember," she answered thoughtfully.

"I wonder if you remember what you told me that night?" Levison continued. "That you were to be married."

Francis had been so attentive that evening. And her engagement to Robert hadn't yet been announced. She remembered how she had lingered over the idea of telling Francis the news.

SHE remembered that he had taken her hand . . . that was before she had mentioned her engagement. He had talked a lot of silly nonsense . . . said a lot of pretty things. And then, suddenly, he had become more serious. That was always Francis's way. She had realized the change almost immediately. His face had come close to hers. She could still feel his lips brushing her hair.

"I'm going to be married to Robert Carlyle," she had told him simply.

"I remember," she repeated, very slowly. "I remember . . . that you said nothing."

"Perhaps the bitterest

Isabel looked as lovely as ever but her eyes were bright, too bright, and where before they had been soft and appealing, now they were almost hard.







"I'm so tired, Francis.  
Let's go... go home."

seemed to realize what had happened. With a frightened cry she fled across the room. Out into the dark hall she sped; up the stairs; down the corridor, until she reached the haven of her own rooms.

In her mad flight, terrified at her own thoughts, she had not noticed the door of Cornelia's room swinging open a little wider than it had been; she had not seen the figure that waited there, half concealed, watching her.

For a little while Francis Levison stood at the foot of the stairs, as though he, too, were trying to clear his mind. At last, with a sort of stately, measured tread, he began to ascend the stairs, carrying the oil lamp Joyce had left. And in his preoccupation, he did not see that door to Cornelia's room closing until only the merest crack was left open; and behind that crack a pair of all-seeing eyes.

In her sitting room Isabel stared at herself in the long pier glass. Was she really herself, looking back at her? She was trembling. She tried to steady herself by gripping the arms of her chair, but her fingers were weak and futile.

As she sat there the door opened. She jumped to her feet, her hand against her mouth to stifle the cry that rose in her throat.

"Francis!" she breathed. "Are you mad? Why did you come here? You must go—go immediately!"

Carefully Levison placed the lamp he had been carrying on the center table.

"I'm sorry, Isabel. I didn't mean to intrude," he said quietly. "But I had to see you again... had to talk to you for just a moment, at least. I didn't come to apologize... exactly. I'm sorry that everything's happened as it has. But I won't take back what I said downstairs. I love you. I love you more than anyone else. Isabel, I can't let you go. Don't you see? I can't come back into your life this way, and then walk out of it, not knowing whether..."

He took a step towards her, holding out his hands. "You do love me! You must love me a little. I can't go away without you. Nothing else matters, now. We'll go away together... somewhere, it doesn't matter!" Isabel waited. "I don't love you. I tell you I don't!" Her voice rose in angry determination. "I love my husband, my baby. Nothing can take me from them. I love Robert, I tell you. I love him."

"You don't, my dear, you don't! You're only

trying to make yourself believe that you do. You're not happy here; you never will be. I want to make you happy. I'd do anything in the world for you."

Two steps and Levison was taking her in his arms.

Frantically Isabel pulled away. "No! I won't listen to you!" She put her hands to her ears, shielding them from his words. "I won't listen. You're mad... absolutely mad to think of such a thing. I can't stand it! You must go! You must!"

"Isabel! Isabel, don't!" Levison was stroking her hair. "You mustn't cry, my dear. I'll be off to London if that's what you want. I'll be off to London first thing in the morning. Goodbye, my dear." He bent over and kissed the golden hair. "Goodbye. And I wish you happiness... always..."

## Chapter IX

EAST LYNNE lay buried in a vast, far-reaching silence. And still Isabel sat huddled in the big chair in her sitting room.

The clock in the hall struck. Wearily Isabel dragged herself to her feet and went over to the mantelpiece. The clock there proclaimed the hour of half past two. Isabel shivered.

Somehow or other she managed to get out of her dress at last. She blew out the lamp, and slipped into bed. The cool, clean sheets soothed her fevered body. But still she couldn't sleep. Her mind raced on and on. Should she tell Robert what had happened? She didn't know what to do.

Robert had seemed to be growing away from her. She couldn't go to him and begin an explanation. He wouldn't understand. It would be better, perhaps, to say nothing; better if she'd stop thinking about the matter entirely. Francis would be gone in the morning. She wouldn't see him again.

It was just an event that had arisen from a set of circumstances. Nothing could be done about it now. If she were in love with Francis, then things might be different. But she wasn't. There was only Robert, and her baby. And the baby meant more to her than anything in the world. It was the baby she must think of and plan for. And with the thought of the child taking possession of her mind, Isabel fell into a troubled sleep.

Joyce was shaking her shoulder, rousing her. "It's half after nine, milady. I brought you some breakfast."

Isabel sat up abruptly. Half past nine! Morning! Joyce pulled back the heavy drapes and the grey light of a grey morning seeped feebly into the room. Rain dripped from the window ledges and trickled along the panes in rivulets.

"There, now, milady." Joyce came back bringing a breakfast tray and placed it on Isabel's lap.

"Miss Cornelia had her breakfast at seven o'clock this morning," Joyce informed her mistress. "She's been out in the garden ever since. So I just thought I'd let you sleep a little longer, milady, knowin' you would be tired after the ball."

At the mention of the affair, Isabel winced.

"How's Master William, Joyce?" Isabel asked finally.

"He's fine, milady," Joyce smiled in answer to the question. "It bein' too wet to take him out this mornin', he's playin' in the nursery."

"Has there been any message from Mr. Carlyle?"

"Miss Cornelia expects him by tea time, milady. And... Oh, yes, Mr. Levison was called to London early this mornin'."

Isabel bit hastily on a piece of toast to try to hide her shaking hands. So Francis had kept his promise. He was gone. And she'd not see him again. It was all over now; finished.

The grey drizzle of the morning turned to heavier rain and sent Isabel to the nursery to entertain William—building houses of blocks and tumbling them over. The worries of the night crept from her mind and lost themselves in the baby's prattle. The outside world became only a hazy dreamland.

But the outside world, to Cornelia, was neither hazy nor a dreamland. It was a grim reality. With a stern, implacable face she sat by the window of her sitting room... the window from which she could watch for her brother's arrival. And at last her vigil was rewarded.

"Hello! Where is everyone?" Carlyle's voice resounded through the hall.

Swiftly, her skirts swishing, Cornelia came down the stairs.

"Well, Cornelia," Robert began.

Cornelia was silent for a moment. Then: "Mr. Levison left early this morning," Cornelia reported pointedly. "He said to tell you that he had received a telegram calling him back to London."

"Well?" Robert's voice was questioning. "What's wrong with that? Undoubtedly some business matter."

WITHOUT further ado she led the way to the drawing room, opened the doors, and stepped inside.

"I say, Corney, what's up?" he demanded.

"It's Isabel... and that... that Mr. Francis Levison!"

"Isabel? And Francis Levison? I must say, Cornelia, I don't quite understand. What do you mean?"

tragedies of our lives arise from words unspoken." The distress in Levison's voice made Isabel look at the man beside her.

"I've thought of that night again and again," he went on. "I've lived it over a thousand times. Isabel, the most pathetic figure in life is the man who places his career above the woman he loves. Isabel... I..."

"But I never dreamed..." she managed to gasp, somehow.

AND then came a flow of words that beat upon her brain, stormed in her ears.

"How could you? I never intended that you should. I thought I could ignore my feelings... crush them... forget them. I tried... tried all these three years. But... Oh, don't you understand? I love you... love you more than anyone else in the world!"

Suddenly she was in his arms. His lips were pressed against her, crushing them; against her eyes, her cheeks, the warm hollows of her neck. She was drowning; the roar of the sea resounded in her ears; the waves covered her, taking her breath. She was sinking, sinking into a black oblivion. Her body trembled, quivered, lay still and quiet.

"Francis! Francis! Don't! Oh, don't!" she moaned. Her hands went to her eyes, as though to brush away the mistiness. All at once she

"Robert, that man . . . that man," and Cornelia mouthed the words. "That man was in Isabel's room last night!"

"Cornelia!"

"Yes, it's true!"

Carlyle choked back the utterance that rose to his lips. The blood drained from his face, leaving it an ashen grey.

"Cornelia," he repeated harshly. "Do you realize what you're saying?"

Cornelia bridled. "Most certainly I realize what I'm saying. I've always known that this would happen. I warned you, Robert."

Robert started towards the bell rope. "We'll see what Isabel has to say about this."

"No, Robert, wait a moment!" Cornelia jumped to her feet, catching her brother's arm. "I'll begin at the beginning. I had one of my headaches, Robert, and I was forced to tell Isabel that we couldn't go to the ball because I was ill. Disregarding me entirely, your wife attended the Hunt Ball, unchaperoned, with Mr. Levison. I was still awake when they returned. I simply couldn't sleep because of my headache. I heard Joyce let them in. They went into the drawing room, and there they stayed for . . . well, for goodness knows how long. He told her that . . . that he loved her, and always had loved her. I know that he kissed her. And then, Isabel ran upstairs and went to her room. I heard her running, and so, of course, I opened my door to see what was the matter. But she didn't stop. She went flying past, and a few moments later Mr. Levison came upstairs with the lamp, and walked straight into her room!"

"Cornelia!" Carlyle leaped to his feet, his face set and hard. "Do you realize that you're speaking of my wife?"

Cornelia sighed. "I'm sorry to have to tell you this, Robert, but it's the truth. If you care to ask your wife for an explanation, I should be glad to hear what she has to say myself."

"Ask Isabel for an explanation? Most certainly I shall." Carlyle pulled the bell rope.

"You rang, sir?" Dodson discreetly waited in the doorway.

"Yes!" Carlyle turned to the butler. "Is Lady Isabel at home?"

"Yes, sir. I believe she's in the nursery with Master William, sir."

"Please tell her that I should like to see her in the drawing room."

## Chapter X

THE moment Isabel opened the drawing room door she realized something was wrong. Carlyle made no gesture of greeting. The muscles of his face never relaxed. When his words finally came, his voice was harsh and demanding. He came to the point

"Isabel," he said slowly, "Cornelia has just told me . . ."

"Oh, please, Robert." She tried to smile, but her lips were stiff. "If we're going to discuss the right or wrong of my going to the ball without your sister, can't we do so alone?"

"No!" Carlyle retorted decisively. "My sister remains. And I'm not concerned with the ball. I'm only concerned with what happened afterwards . . . here! In this house!"



He realized now as never before, that he really loved Isabel.

The unexpectedness of her husband's words caught Isabel off her guard. Her hand went to her throat in consternation. She stared at Cornelia. What had the woman told Robert? What did she know? What imputations had she brought to her brother?

"I'm sorry you had to hear about that from someone else," Isabel said simply, looking at her husband. "I wanted to tell you myself."

In the dead silence that fell upon the room Cornelia's disdainful sniff of disbelief sounded like an exploding bomb. For one brief moment Isabel felt that she could fly at her sister-in-law and shake her . . . slap her . . . scratch that ugly face.

"Well," Carlyle waited for the explanation.

"YOU'RE making it very difficult for me to explain something that really has no importance," Isabel began with unaffected candor. "I don't know what Cornelia has told you, Robert, but there is nothing that I am afraid to confess. When Francis and I came back last night we went out on the balcony . . ."

"And he . . . he kissed you!" It was not entirely anger and indignation that forced Carlyle to repeat his sister's words. There was jealousy . . . a jealousy that he felt for his wife when he thought of her in the arms of another man.

"Yes, he kissed me," she acknowledged quietly. "But Robert, can't you see that I'm trying to make you understand? It was moonlight. I could still hear the music of the dance. I was filled with excitement . . . the romance of the night. I was a girl again, back in Mayfair. Now that I look back upon it, it all seems so silly. I give you my word, Robert," she said, shaking her head, "that is all . . . it all meant nothing."

"It meant nothing that he followed you to your room," Carlyle's voice cut like the lash of a whip.

"That's true," she spoke with a kind of treacherous calmness that hid the surging volcano within her. "Francis did come to my room. He begged me to go away with him. He said that he loved me . . . always had loved me. I told him that he was mad . . . that I loved you, my baby, my home. I asked him to go away. I never wanted to see him again. He understood, and . . . he left. That's all."

"And you expect me to believe that?" Carlyle's voice was low and hoarse.

Isabel drew herself up in indignation. Yet why should she be surprised, she asked herself.

"No," she shook her head with a weariness that combined hopelessness and desperation. "Not! How can I expect you to believe me after you have listened to her." She glanced at Cornelia and then away again quickly. "It's always been her word against mine—her orders

against mine. Her desires above my wishes."

"How dare you say such a thing?" Cornelia asked. "I never interlered!"

"How can you say that?" She whirled on Cornelia, her face white, her eyes burning. "You interlered with every move I made—every breath I drew! From the moment I came to East Lynne you began to try to rule me as you've ruled everything else here. You've dominated me and my child."

"Robert!" There was a choked gasp from Cornelia as she turned to her brother for help against this attack.

"Yes, I'll speak now," Isabel went on, disregarding her husband's warning gesture; Cornelia's interjection. "You've crushed every impulse, destroyed every bit of romance that was in me. I've never been a free human being since I entered this house."

"ISABEL, if you . . ." Carlyle tried to inter-

rupt the tirade. "And you!" Isabel turned on her husband accusingly. "Can't you see that you're as much to blame for what happened last night as I am?"

"How dare you say that?" Now it was Carlyle's turn to become indignant. "How dare you blame me . . . for . . . for last night!" He rasped out the words as though they were poisonous.

"I blame you," she answered, "because you never tried to know the woman you married. Why, if you had loved me half as much as I loved you, you would have seen how unbearable my life here has been. But you've never given me one real thought to my happiness since she . . ."

"I'll not hear another word against my sister!" Carlyle interrupted, turning to Cornelia and placing his hand protectively on the woman's arm.

"Oh, yes you will!" Isabel's low, melodious voice became resonant, deep, flooded with tense emotion. "She's made my life a constant humiliation. She's been planning . . . waiting . . . hoping for the moment when you would drive me out!"

She faced Cornelia, her voice breaking hysterically. "Well, you're not going to drive me out. Because I'm going . . . I'm going, you understand! But I'm going of my own free will . . . now!"

Her voice choking with the long pent-up sob, Isabel turned and ran from the room. Ran . . . and ran . . . up the stairs, down the corridor to her own room.

"You wanted me, milady!" Joyce appeared in the doorway.

"Yes . . . yes!" Isabel spoke hurriedly. "Get the baby ready, Joyce. We're leaving right away!"

Isabel opened a long wardrobe and from the

bottom shelf seized a traveling bag. She threw it on the bed. With feverish energy she pulled open drawers of dressers and cupboards, snatching a dress here, toilet articles there, and tumbling them helter-skelter into the case. Her jewel box containing her mother's jewels, a photograph of the baby, a pair of tiny shoes . . . all went in at once. She snapped the bag shut.

She snatched it up and ran back towards the nursery.

As she reached the nursery door she halted abruptly. In front of the half open door stood her husband, his form blocking the entrance.

"You can't go in there," he said quietly, nodding toward the baby's room.

"What do you mean?" Isabel gasped. "William is going with me. Joyce is packing . . ."

"William is staying here," Carlyle returned frigidly.

"He's not! He's mine! And I'm taking him with me! You can't stop me!" Isabel caught hold of her husband's arm, trying to push him to one side, trying to get past him. But he merely shook off her clutching fingers.

"I can stop you," he warned, and his tone was ominous. "You forget that the law is on my side. The laws of England can take any child from such a woman as you! Laws were made to protect the sanctity of the house, the honour of the family."

Again she tried to push her way into the nursery. Again Carlyle's arm thrust her back.

"But I'll not leave this house without him!" Isabel broke in defiantly. "You don't have to believe me. I can't help what you think. You can turn me out, you can do what you like, but you can't take my baby. You can't punish me like that. I'll do anything you say. I'll go anywhere you tell me . . . if I can only have him."

"You have made your decision." There was dreadful finality in Carlyle's tones. "You are leaving this house alone. You will never come back. There isn't a court in England that will believe your story."

The door of the nursery opened and closed, and Carlyle was gone. For an instant Isabel stood there on the threshold, overcome with stupefaction. Alone . . . alone . . . alone! She fell against the door, beating upon it with futile, strengthless fists.

## Chapter XI

UP the gangplank of the Channel steamer at Dover wharf, and into the midst of the confusion came Isabel Carlyle, clinging to the arm of her father. A heavy chiffon veil concealed her features and protected her face from the cold dampness. Mount Severn piloted his daughter to her cabin.

Isabel loosened her cape and removed the

heavy veil. Mount Severn sank into a chair.

"I think you're doing the wisest thing," he began, "in getting out of England until this scandal blows over. It's been a pretty sorry affair."

Isabel seated herself on the edge of the bed.

"I'm not leaving England because of the scandal," she spoke a little sharply. "I'm not even thinking of what people are saying. I'm going away, hoping to forget. I must forget!"

"What a frightful affair!" Mount Severn persisted. "Divorce . . . notoriety . . . the papers full of it! It's going to be a bit awkward for me, you know. I tell you, Isabel," he grumbled, "The trouble with you is you've too much pride. You should swallow it. You should have taken Carlyle's money when it was offered to you."

"I couldn't!" she shook her head. "I've enough of my own to last for a little while. I'd rather not discuss that, if you please."

"All right! All right!" Mount Severn said testily. "I shan't say any more. But I dislike seeing you going away alone. I'd go with you myself, but I've been invited to Scotland for some shooting. I don't care for the shooting, as you know, but the dinners are rather good."

"Don't worry about me. I'll be all right. Nothing really matters."

"Then you're certain there's nothing I can do for you?"

"Yes, there is one thing you can do for me, Father," Isabel began anxiously. "When you can, try to see my baby and write to me about him."

"Oh, don't worry about the baby," her father said easily, "Carlyle'll take good care of him."

The loud hoot of a whistle sounded through the corridors.

"Goodbye, dear . . . Goodbye, Isabel . . ."

Father and daughter kissed perfunctorily, and Mount Severn hurried down the passage, turning to wave once. And then he was lost in the fog.

Isabel stood at the railing, trying to peer through the mist.

"Isabel!" The low repetition of her name brought the girl around with a start.

"Francis Levison!"

"Isabel," Levison said softly. "I heard you were leaving England today. I couldn't let you go without telling you how sorry I am that I was responsible for what happened. I'd have tried to see you before, but I knew that for your sake I shouldn't. But I can't tell you how sorry . . ."

"It doesn't matter. It's all over," Isabel's voice was terribly tired.

AS she stood there at the rail sickening thoughts of all that had happened rose to confront her. Once again she could see the crowded courtroom, the whispering, nodding

heads and sneering faces. It was quite true that nobody had believed what she said. It had all been as Carlyle had prophesied. The court didn't believe her story . . . She shivered.

"Perhaps you feel now that it doesn't matter very much what the world thinks," Levison was saying gently. "But you still have your life to live. There is only one way to do it. You must forget."

"I left England because I wanted to try to forget," Isabel explained. "Oh, Francis, I must forget! I must! I must! But all I can do is think of that horrible trial. And then, the realization that I've lost my baby!"

Isabel leaned back against the railing, closing her eyes.

"How did you happen to be on board this boat?" she asked suddenly.

"I came because I had to talk to you," Levison explained again. "All during the trial I knew that I shouldn't dare try to see you. That would only have made matters much worse. So I kept out of your way. But now that it's all over I want to make whatever amends I can. I watched you on board with your father. I waited until he left, because I didn't know what he might think if he saw me here. I couldn't think of you going off alone. I know it sounds cruel to say it now, but you need laughter . . . you need the light-hearted freedom you once had. Let me restore those things to you, Isabel. In Vienna, in Paris, wherever you wish. There's nothing I wouldn't do to make you happy. Let me try?"

Isabel shrugged her shoulders, staring out into the night, scarcely heeding the man's words. "Fog!" she shuddered. "Fog, getting into our lives . . . into our hearts . . . into our souls!"

## Chapter XII

VIENNA . . . the world's capital of gaiety!

In a fiacre, open to the soft breath of late spring air, open to reveal short glimpses of the sparkling stars, rode Isabel Carlyle and Francis Levison. Other carriages crowded with laughing, shouting merry-makers, passed them at every turn.

It seemed impossible to her, when she allowed herself to think of it, that almost two years had passed since she had gone from East Lynne, and yet, to all outward appearances she was the same. There was a time when she felt that she did not dare to look at herself in a mirror. Surely such intense suffering should make a difference. But Youth has strength; has Nature herself to assist in the process of forgetting. So Isabel to forget, had recklessly flung herself into the midst of the gayest crowds, the liveliest parties which Vienna could offer. And the young, mad military set took her to its light-hearted bosom.



"Isabel, I want you to tell me the truth. Are you happy?"





"Please, aren't you forgetting yourself?" Isabel retorted sharply.

"Was there any further news today?" Isabel turned to Levison, breaking the silence. She hated silences that left her free to think.

Levison shook his head. "Nothing further," he answered. "But any day, now, I'm certain we'll hear of a declaration of war. France has been actually preparing for two years; she won't wait much longer. There's too much jealousy between France and Prussia."

"But England? What will happen there?" "I think England will have nothing to do with the quarrel," he said easily. "From all I hear, this will be war between the German states and France. But why are you so interested?"

"Oh, I don't know," Isabel shrugged. "I suppose it's merely because everybody's talking about war. What shall we do, you and I, if France does begin an invasion?"

"Return to Paris, I think. We'll be safer there. Perhaps we may have to return."

Through the trees they could see the main pavilion of the Dommayer Casino where the symphony orchestra played night after night the music of Johann Strauss and Lanner. Beyond lay a platform where dancing couples whirled and pivoted to the tunes of the most famous waltzes of the world. At the little tables the popping of champagne corks sounded.

They alighted at the entrance to the Chinese pavilion. Isabel stopped for a moment, surveying the members of the party there. Then one young officer, catching sight of Isabel and Levison jumped to his feet. The others followed.

"Ah! Good evening!" There was the click of

heels, deep bows, and the men trooped forward to kiss Isabel's hand. Everybody tried to talk at once. Someone handed her a glass of champagne.

The officer on her left seized his glass and touched its rim against the bottom of hers.

"To love," he called out.

Isabel acknowledged the young officer's toast.

"To you," she returned laughing.

"No—I To you!" The officer on her right clinked his glass against the side of hers.

"All right! To me!" Isabel raised her glass in the midst of the others, and then drank.

Dancing and drinking alternated throughout the evening. Further down the table Levison sat talking in furtive whispers to the elderly man beside him.

Isabel looked as lovely as ever, he told himself. But in these glowing lights he could see that she had changed. Her eyes were bright, too bright, and where, before, they had been soft and appealing, now they were almost hard.

And her mouth . . . the mouth that had been so sweetly childish, seemed to show a strain at its corners.

As the orchestra broke into a waltz he claimed his dance.

OUT on the dance floor, Isabel suddenly shivered as though she were cold.

"Haden't we better think about going home?" Levison asked as they danced. "It's almost three o'clock."

"Oh, no, not yet," she pleaded. "I don't want to go yet. You know the only way I can sleep is . . . sheer exhaustion. I shouldn't sleep if we left now. I must keep on."

"Are you . . . regretting things? It's not very flattering to me."

"No . . . no!" Isabel laughed, a forced, brittle laugh. "I'm happy tonight."

The music stopped, there was a burst of applause, and then Levison led Isabel back to the Chinese pavilion. Once more her admirers gathered about her.

"Oh, who is that?" Isabel's exclamation brought the attention of the members of the group to the central pavilion.

"Ah, that is a country-woman of yours, Madame," one of the officers informed her. "Madame Neilson, the actress. You must have heard her at Covent Garden. She is the guest tonight of Herr Strauss."

The orchestra members settled their instruments; the conductor lifted his baton; and the strains of gentle music filled the gardens, as the singer's voice took up the aria from "The Bohemian Girl."

"When other lips and other hearts  
Their tales of love shall tell . . ."

Isabel set down her glass, staring at the woman on the stage. Why, that was her song . . .

her own song; the song she loved because Robert had loved it; the one she had sung as a lullaby to her baby. Did Robert still love it, or had he put it out of his heart, as he had put her out? Did anyone ever sing it to her baby now?

*"There may, perhaps in such a scene  
Some recollections be  
Of days that have as happy been  
And you'll remember me . . ."*

Remember! Remember, Robert! It was his voice calling out to her. His voice, and she was at East Lynne. He was bending over her as she sat at the piano. He reached out his hand to place it over hers. No! No! It wasn't! It wasn't Robert. No! It was the officer on her right, and his hand was over hers.

She scarcely knew whether she screamed aloud or not, but all at once she realized that everybody at the table was looking at her.

Swiftly Levison was at her side, catching her by the shoulder, supporting her.

Her eyes turned to him imploringly. "I'm so tired. Let's go . . . go home."

"Of course, my dear." Tenderly Levison drew the mantle about her shoulders and helped her from the chair.

Little murmurs followed their course as they made their way into the darkness of the night. And the last words of her song,

*"And you'll remember, you'll remember . . . me."*

### Chapter XIII

ISABEL tossed restlessly in her bed. It was already July, and still Francis remained in Vienna. That was strange, she reflected, frowning. Last season they had gone to the Swiss Alps to escape the heat. She tried to convince herself that everything was all right.

A knock sounded on the door, and a maid appeared. "Good morning, Madame," the girl curtsied.

"Good morning, Marie. Is there any post?" "Yes, Madame. Several letters. Shall I open the curtains?"

"Please. And then bring my chocolate."

Isabel sat up dully, propped the pillows behind her, and reached for the newspapers and the letters that the maid brought with the chocolate. With a quick intake of her breath she dropped them all save one. . . one that bore the hand-writing she loved to see; the dear, familiar English postage stamp.

"My lady." Her lips unconsciously formed the words as she read them. "This is to tell your ladyship I received the birthday gift you sent for Master William. I did not dare give it to him; if Miss Cornelia knew it would cost me my place, but I did give him the kiss. He is well and happy. Your obedient servant, Joyce."

SLOWLY Isabel folded the letter, holding it close to her breast. The hot tears dimmed her eyes. Dear, faithful Joyce!

A tap at the door. Marie looked out, then closing the portal behind her.

"Monsieur is arrive, Madame," she announced. In the drawing-room Levison paced back and forth nervously.

Should he tell her . . . shouldn't he tell her? The questions see-sawed in his mind, unanswered.

It had been a bad morning, taking it all around. The British Ambassador had sent for him. He had waited in the small ante-room, knowing fairly well what was coming.

"It is my unpleasant duty to remind you," the Ambassador had begun, "that as a member of the British Embassy in Vienna, you have violated the confidence imposed in you by a foreign and friendly power. You have taken advantage of your position in an attempt to make money by



Something must happen soon, she could not go on this way!



"Why did you send for me, Isabel. I haven't any money to give you."

disturbing the peace of this country, by fomenting public opinion on behalf of the French Government in its crisis with Prussia.

"I shall ask for your immediate resignation and the surrender of your papers. You will not be permitted to return to England."

He had merely bowed in token of the fact that he had heard and comprehended.

"There is a train leaving Vienna tonight for Paris," the Ambassador had suggested. "After today, the Embassy can offer you no further immunity from arrest. That is all."

"Good morning, dear," Isabel came into the drawing-room, a delicate peignoir about her shoulders. She went to him, kissing him.

"Isabel," he said hastily, "I . . . then he stopped, regarding the girl seriously. "I want you to tell me the truth. Are you happy? Are you happy with me? You have no regrets?"

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Isabel stared, puzzled. "Why, of course I'm happy," she said at last.

"And you haven't any regrets? You must tell me Isabel."

"No, no regrets." And she attempted to smile. But his peculiar manner continued to perplex her. "Why do you ask?"

"Isabel, if something happened in my life . . . Levison pressed her hand anxiously. "If something happened . . . If I couldn't continue to give you the things I always want you to have . . . the things you should have . . ."

"That wouldn't make any difference to me!" Her head went up, her chin high, and her voice was steady. "Whatever is the matter, Francis?"

He hesitated. "I've been gambling," he said. "I've been gambling with my career . . . my future. I've lost."

"I . . . I don't understand."

Levison turned to the window and stood there, staring down at the street below. Suppose he did tell Isabel everything? Suppose he told her that he had been dismissed from the diplomatic service for giving aid to France when his own country was remaining neutral, using his position to gain money from a foreign power? She'd probably hate him . . . hate him for his treachery.

Would she turn against him, leave him, when he was down?

"Francis, won't you tell me what's worrying you?" Gently Isabel took the man's arm, standing beside him, looking up at him.

"Do you remember once I told you that all my life I'd been rotten and weak underneath. Well, there's no doubt of it now. The wonder of it is that I've lasted as long as I have. I am rotten and weak. I've tried to hide it, but . . ."

He reached for the brandy.

Isabel caught his hand.

He shook her off, poured the drink and swallowed it quickly.

"I must do something . . . I must do something." He began to pace the floor, muttering to himself. "A man without a country!"

"What do you mean?" Isabel caught his words and they frightened her.

Suddenly he stopped in front of Isabel, grasping her shoulders so that she faced him.

"You've tossed your life in with mine," he said roughly. "So far, so good. But I can't guarantee anything from now on. Do you understand? I don't know what will happen. I can't promise you anything at all. It's not too late for you to turn back . . . Tonight I leave for Paris."

"For Paris?"

"Yes," Levison nodded slowly, watching her.

There was a slight pause. Then Isabel looked up, her blue eyes unwavering. "Very well."

she said simply. "I'll be ready." Not a question; not a reproach.

Impulsively Levison took her in his arms, kissing her. "You dear, dear person," he murmured over and over again. And his eyes were misty with tears.

#### Chapter XIV

FRANCE was mobilizing. Everywhere sounded the tread of marching feet, gay feet, light feet, ready feet. The strains of the Marseillaise flooded broad avenue and blind alley; filled the street corners and cafés. "On to the Rhine . . . the Rhine . . . the Rhine!" France and Germany were at war.

On the little iron balcony on the second floor of an ancient, once beautiful home, stood Isabel and Francis Levison. The laughter and shouts of the crowds on the street below were augmented by the cries and songs of the group of people within the apartment. A piano was noisily strummed, glasses were held high, and toasts were drunk to the anticipated victories of the French army.

As another champagne cork popped, Isabel turned wearily and stepped into the room. A poet, distinguished by the fact that his hair curled about the collar of his shirt which stood open at the throat, was noisily insistent.

"To La Belle France!" he sang out. "To La Belle France!"

The man at the piano banged the keys and set the "Marseillaise" to a waltz tempo, improvising the bass to fit his own version of the melody. Two actresses, whose heavily jeweled hands sparkled in the morning sunshine began to sing the words.

"I drink a toast to the new Paris!" the artist insisted. "Triumphant in war . . . greatest capital in the world! Where shall we go? Let's all go to Antoine's café! We're missing all the excitement! Who's coming?" He banged his glass on the table.

"I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me," Isabel murmured.

"Oh, very well!" a woman shrugged. "And you, cheri?" she called to Levison.

He glanced sharply at Isabel, frowning. "I'll join you later," he muttered. "Wait for me."

At the door banged on the last departing guest. Isabel sank into a chair and surveyed the room. A broken glass lay beneath a chair. The table spread that had once been a piece of beautifully worked tapestry was stained with wine. The top of the grand piano showed little white rings where damp glasses had rested too long. A cigar, or match, had burned a round hole in the upholstery of a chairback.

"Well, you evidently don't care for our Bohemian friends," Levison said.



Isabel heard him but scarcely comprehended the meaning of his words.

"No, I can't say that I do," Isabel answered. "Well, neither do I." Levison went to a decanter on a side table and began to pour himself a glass of brandy. "But beggars can't be choosers. We can't live like hermits."

"Of course not," Isabel agreed hastily.

LEVISON gulped his liquor. He was annoyed, a little angry with Isabel for declining to go out to the cafés. If she didn't like these friends of his choosing, why didn't she find others more interesting to her. He had told her before they left Vienna that things would be different, and she made her decision; had come with him to Paris.

"I'm expecting my father," Isabel said. "I wrote and asked him to come. He cabled that he'd arrive today."

"Your father? Why? Why did you write to

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him? You never told me anything about it." "Well," Isabel began evasively, hoping to put a stop to the scene she felt might ensue. "I merely want to see him. That's all."

"Oh, you want to see him!" Levison spat out the words sarcastically. "It didn't occur to you, I suppose, that I might have been consulted . . . that I might not want to see him! You seem to manage a great many things quite easily without taking me into consideration." He poured another brandy.

"So your father's coming here," he said loudly. "Perhaps he'll return the money I loaned him the last time I was in England. Miracles have happened!"

"Please! Aren't you forgetting yourself?" Isabel retorted sharply. She could feel the blood mounting to her cheeks.

Levison shrugged his shoulders. "Now, if you'll excuse me," he drained the glass, set it back on the table, and reached for his hat and stick. "I'll take myself off. A bit indelicate, what, for an erring lover to intrude between a devoted father and daughter." The door banged shut behind his departing figure.

A flood of resentment against such conduct swept over Isabel, leaving her cold and shaken. Weakly she dropped into a chair.

Would it do any good, she wondered dully, talking to her father? She rather doubted it; she wanted so much to hear news; wanted to know how matters stood at East Lynne. Perhaps . . . perhaps things might have changed.

## Chapter XV

AN aged concierge opened the door. He led the way up two long flights of thinly carpeted stairs and pulled the bell.

"Father! Oh, father, I'm so glad to see you!" Isabel's arms were about his neck. Mount Severn kissed her and patted her shoulder.

"Paris! Same old smelly Paris!" he grunted, seating himself. "Always at war."

A little, wistful smile overspread the girl's face. "I did hate asking you to make the trip. Only I wanted to see you so badly."

"Yes, yes," he agreed testily. "So I should imagine." He gazed about the room, noting its shabbiness.

Well, it must be true, then, all that he had heard, he reflected. Levison's money was gone and his career as a diplomat was over.

"Humph!" Mount Severn cleared his throat. "I'll have to return tonight, you know. Why did you send for me? I haven't any money." Better explain right away, before he was asked, he thought. Dreadful shame, though, seeing Isabel reduced to this.

"I'm not going to ask you for money," the girl hastened to reassure her father.



Sir Richard beamed but Cornelia remained silent.

"What I really need is your advice, father," she explained. "But first, tell me . . . have you any news of East Lynne? Have you seen . . . have you seen anyone from there? What is happening?"

"Humph!" Mount Severn twisted about nervously in his chair. "Of course you've heard that the final decree of divorce was awarded to Carlyle?"

"Yes . . . yes, I heard that long ago," Isabel nodded impatiently. "While we . . . that is, while I was in Vienna, I read it in one of the English newspapers. But I don't mean news of that sort. You . . . you haven't seen Robert? That is, I mean I thought perhaps he might have forgiven me . . . a little. Maybe time has softened him. Maybe in his heart he's sorry for what he did?"

Mount Severn hesitated for an instant and then spoke abruptly. "My dear, did you think that you could escape gossip? Did you think that news of you would not travel back to England?"

"I never thought of it," Isabel returned simply. "I . . . why . . ." She stood up, straight and tall, her chin raised, her whole attitude one of defiance. "After all, what I have done is my affair, and mine alone. I've asked no favours!"

"Perhaps not," Mount Severn said quietly. "But the cruellest truth is that we cannot live our lives apart from the opinion of the world."

"Oh!" The painful wail escaped involuntarily. "But do you . . ." She wavered, fearful

of the answer to her question. "Do you think Robert knows?"

Mount Severn's eyebrows flew up in surprise. "Knows? Undoubtedly he knows. The purpose of gossip is to wound."

HER father was right, Isabel thought. Carlyle was right, the whole world was right. It was only she who was wrong.

And the gossip. She shuddered. She had never thought of it in that way before. She had never thought of herself as the sort of woman the world branded her. Why, she wasn't . . . she wasn't. She had just gone on living.

Mount Severn looked at his daughter quizzically.

"May I inquire why, after all these months, you suddenly become interested again in East Lynne?"

"Oh, but I haven't suddenly become interested in East Lynne! I've only tried to forget! Night and day I've tried to forget."

She shook her head. "But I couldn't!" Mount Severn tried to think of something comforting to say.

"And Robert? I suppose he will marry again?" Now, it was over. Now, she'd know.

"Yes," her father said. "As a matter of fact,

"Oh, Robert, this is our first Christmas together. I'm so happy . . ."



his engagement to Barbara Hare has already been announced. I believe they're to be married shortly."

"Oh!" Isabel gasped, and turned away quickly. Well, Cornelia had got her way at last.

"After all, my dear," Mount Severn rambled on. "Carlyle has the right to marry."

Isabel turned. "I'm not thinking of Carlyle!" she burst out. "But don't you see, he'll bring that woman to East Lynne. She's going to take my place in my baby's heart." Tears filled her eyes. "I can't stand it! No matter what I did, that isn't fair. Maybe if Robert knew how much I've suffered, he'd relent a little. If he could only know how I wake up with my baby's fingers clinging to mine! And now another woman's to take my place, to tend him, love him. She'll make him love her. He won't know me!"

HER voice broke. Piteful sobs racked her.

Mount Severn patted Isabel's shoulder.

"I wish there was something I might do. Don't take on so."

"Oh, but there is . . . there is something you can do." Isabel turned a tear-stained face to her father, seizing his hands and clinging to him for support. "That's why I've sent for you. I want you to go to East Lynne. I want you to see Robert. You must see him, talk to him, plead with him, reason with him. You must! You must, father. Beg him to let me see my child once more . . . let me touch him . . . just hold him in my arms. I can't stand it any longer. You must make him understand!"

She stopped, exhausted by her outburst. Her father put his arms about her and gently led her to a chair.

"Will you do that? Will you go to East Lynne?" she begged.

"Yes, of course, I will." And for the first time Mount Severn was deeply touched; for the first time he understood a little of what Isabel had suffered. "I'll do what I can. I'll go to Carlyle. I'll tell him what you've said. I don't think there's a man on this earth who could refuse you what you ask."

Isabel sighed brokenly, but this slight hope buoyed her up. "Oh, my dear! I'll be so anxious until I hear from you. Cable me as soon as you see Robert, won't you?"

SIX weeks later the Emperor, Napoleon the Third, was a prisoner in the hands of the Germans and the siege of Paris was begun.

During these bitter, savage days Isabel went to the little post office, which had been converted into a dressing station for the wounded, to do what she could for the unfortunate. No word had yet arrived from her father . . . Of course the matter of getting messages through at such a time as this was entirely problematical.



Matters between Francis Levison and herself had gone from bad to worse. Their relationship was strained almost to the breaking point. Isabel rose from her work. From a cupboard in the cold room she brought out a cape that had seen better days. Listlessly she went downstairs to speak to the postmaster.

The elderly Frenchman behind the mail window nodded to her as she entered. This poor English lady! Every day, twice a day, she came to ask for the post. And never did he have anything for her. It was very sad.

"I am very sorry, Madame," he said in French. "There is nothing yet."

"Are you quite certain, Monsieur?" Isabel persisted wistfully.

"I'll look again." One by one the postmaster went over the few letters which had not been called for. Finally he shook his head.

"Do you think there is any possibility of receiving a cable from England?" Isabel asked.

"That is very hard to say, Madame." The little Frenchman didn't want to hurt the English lady. "We are fortunate enough to receive a cable once in a while. Yes, I'm certain that a cable would reach Paris. But a letter might have more chance of getting through."

"Thank you, Monsieur." She turned away.

For a few moments she stood in the sheltering doorway, dreading to step out into the cold; dreading that short walk which would take her back to the flat, to an evening with Francis. Something must happen soon, she thought.

"Ah, Madame Levison!" A hand touched her arm as she found herself facing Dr. Le Blanc, one of the physicians who came to the dressing station, a tall, pink checked, black bearded man. "You have forgotten your rations." He held out a package.

"Oh, thank you. I did forget them," Isabel tried to smile. The doctor was always so kindly, even though his dark eyes daily grew more tired, more care-worn from his long vigils. "I'm sorry you were troubled . . ."

"No, no; it is nothing, Madame. I didn't know that you had gone from upstairs until just a moment ago. I am happy to be of service to you." He bowed.

There was a little pause. Then: "You must be very tired," the doctor said gently. "I'm afraid you are working too hard."

For one mad moment she was tormented by a desire to burst into tears and sob out her story to this doctor. But one couldn't do that!

"No, I'm not working too hard." She shook her head. "I . . . I'm just a little tired tonight. But there's so much to be done and so many wounded men."

"I know," the doctor agreed. "It's a great strain, however. I'd advise you to get a little more rest. Don't come back so early tomorrow morning. Sleep a little longer."

"Thank you, doctor. Perhaps I shall. Good night."

"Good night, Madame."

Isabel started down the street, the bundle of rations under her arm. The cold wind stung her face and whipped her skirts about her ankles. She must formulate some plan of action in case no letter or cable came from her father.

Somewhat, through all their adversities, she had managed to keep her mother's diamond pendant and earrings; wore them always in a little chamois bag hung about her neck and hidden in the bosom of her dress . . . They would pay her passage to England.

## Chapter XVI

CHRISTMAS EVE! Snow lay thick and heavy over East Lynne, in great, white drifts. In the wide, open hall there was a hum of activity. A bright fire burned in the fireplace, shooting up licking tongues of flame around the fat logs. Great branches of holly and mistletoe were carefully arranged in vases on the tables. The vast living-room blazed with lighted candles. In the corner, where the stairway turned, stood a tall Christmas tree, the tips of its needled branches pointing upward.

Half way up on the ladder stood the butler, Dodson, draping in well calculated loops the strand of gold tinsel he unreeled. Stooping over a box and lifting out the tissue-wrapped orna-

ments was the present Mrs. Robert Carlyle.

In the center of the hall, standing so that she could survey the tree and the little group around it, was Cornelia.

"No, Dodson," she was advising, "that loop should be just a little higher. Try the next branch."

"Yes, Miss Cornelia." Obediently Dodson rearranged the loop.

"You know just where each piece belongs, don't you?" said Barbara with something of admiration in her tone.

"Yes, that's just the way it has always been decorated. No more . . . no less."

"Oh, listen!" Barbara exclaimed. "I think I hear the carol-singers. They're coming along the road now."

*"God rest ye, merrie gentlemen . . .  
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour . . .  
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour . . .  
Was born this Christmas day . . ."*

The deep voices of men blended softly in the beautiful old carol.

As Cornelia entered the dining room, Richard Hare appeared coming from the pantry, a great silver wassail bowl balanced in his hands.

"Pon my soul!" he chuckled, highly pleased with himself. "No one on this tight little island can brew a Christmas punch with half the genius of your humble servant." He made a deep bow.

"And on this occasion, I outdid myself in honor of m' daughter and m' new son-in-law. Ah, here they are! I shall drink to a long and happily married life to both of 'em."

"Thank you, father . . . Thank you, sir!" Barbara and Carlyle responded to the toast.

CORNELIA took a glass, put it delicately to her lips.

"Too much lemon peel," she objected acidly.

"Lemon peel?" Sir Richard repeated incredulously. This was the first time in his life his Christmas punch had ever been criticized.

"Take that out, Dodson," Cornelia turned to the butler. "I'll make the punch myself."

In the midst of his father-in-law's confusion Carlyle caught Barbara's arm.

"Let's go into the drawing room," he whispered. Together they opened the doors and entered the festive, garlanded room.

"This is our first Christmas together, my dear," he said softly.

"Yes," Barbara answered, just as softly. "And I shall never forget it."

"Well, then," Carlyle began to reach into his coat pocket, "close your eyes and make a wish."

Obediently Barbara closed her eyes while Robert drew forth a gleaming emerald pendant and dropped it into her hand.



"Robert, dear, there is something I must tell you. I received a letter today."

"Oh!" Barbara's eyes flew open and she held up the chain with the dazzling jewel. "Oh, my darling! How exquisite! Oh, it's perfectly beautiful!" She raised her face up to Robert, standing on tiptoe, and kissed him.

Carlyle took the chain and clasped it about his wife's neck. "Merry Christmas, dearest."

There was a long pause. Barbara still fingered the pendant at her throat.

"Robert, dear," she said at last, "this morning I received a letter from Mount Severn. Of course, I hardly know him."

"Was it . . . was it about HER?" Carlyle brought out the last word as though it burned.

"Yes," Barbara nodded. "No, Robert, dear, please listen." She raised her hand in a silencing gesture as her husband was about to speak.

"I want to tell you. Mount Severn urged me to speak to you. He said that I, being a woman, might understand. And I think I do."

"Barbara!" Carlyle's voice cut across his wife's words. "You know how I feel about this matter. I was very plain in my explanations to Mount Severn. I am amazed that he should make any second appeal, and especially to you."

"I told him the chapter was closed, once and for all. William is never to learn any more of his mother than I can possibly help. And now, my dear, I think we may consider the matter at an end. I would rather that you didn't discuss it."

"Of course," Barbara assented hurriedly.

"I'm sorry, dear. I'll never mention it again."

While upstairs, in the nursery, Joyce was patiently trying to induce a wriggling figure to lie still and go to sleep.

"Why do you always give me two kisses?"



"Why do you always give me two kisses?" little William asked drowsily.

William asked drowsily, his lids half-closing. "Oh, one is from me," Joyce explained softly. "An' one is from someone who loves you best of all. Good night, darlin'."

Softly she tip-toed from the bed, turning down the oil lamp until the room was lost in darkness.

The master was too hard on her ladyship, that he was. And her always so good and kind, never doing a wrong, never harming a soul. The poor lady!

## Chapter XVII

NIGHT after night, the tiny packet of rations clasped under her arm, Isabel straggled back to the one solitary room that now gave her and Francis shelter. Even the cheap, small, shabby flat had proved too expensive. Their money was at an end... everything was at an end, a bitter end, too. It was only a matter of days until there would be nothing left to them but the streets, the parks, or perhaps... the river.

Tonight Isabel struggled against the storm, hugging the walls of houses closely for what little protection they afforded.

At last she turned into a narrow alleyway that led to a dingy, ill-kept court. She groped her way up a flight of narrow, rickety stairs, the bare tread echoing hollowly to her heavy, dragging footsteps.

Once inside the draughty room she dropped her bundle on the table and lighted a candle. The flickering, wavering illumination, kindly as it was, showed the paper peeling from the walls, the battered, broken furniture. Only the necessities of the barest living were left. Her fingers cold, almost to numbness, fumbled with her hat and finally set it on the table. She sank into a chair and tried to warm her hands over the candle's scanty flame.

The sound of footsteps was heard on the stairs, the door handle turned, and Levison stood on the threshold.

LEVISON had been drinking heavily, Isabel knew. But then, that was nothing unusual nowadays. The Francis Levison who had once been a beau of London society, who had always looked as though he had just come from the hands of a most fastidious valet, now looked as though he might have stepped from the gutter. His damp clothes were wrinkled and spotted. His cravat was knotted untidily and had slipped a little to one side. His face was haggard, his eyes bloodshot. There was a thick stubble of beard on his face.

Vaguely Isabel wondered why they were still together. All the little pretences of nicety, or decency, had fled. At times it was unbearable.

"Well?" Finally Levison dragged a chair to the table, scraping it against the floor, and banged it down. "What's for tonight?" He tore away the wrapping from the package Isabel had laid on the table. "Corn husks! Black as pitch!" he grumbled. "Is that all we have?" Isabel nodded, paying very little attention to the man. "That's as much as anyone has," she answered drearily.

"Why don't you stop it?" He rose to his feet suddenly, his voice harsh and strident. "Why don't they stop it! The madness of these people who think they can go on living in this be-



sieged city! Nothing but starvation! People dying like flies! Disease and pestilence... and dead bodies! Why don't they surrender?" Levison repeated, pacing the floor. "If Paris doesn't surrender today it will be bombarded! They've got to surrender, or we'll all die!"

"Stop it! Stop it!" Isabel commanded harshly. "Can't we do something? It's no good talking about it and doing nothing. We must get out. There must be something you can do!"

"Something I can do?" His laugh was grimly sarcastic; his lips twisted in mockery. "I might take my pistol and see you safely through

the enemy lines. And after that heroic gesture..."

"Oh, don't joke with me!" Desperately Isabel spoke, clipping her words short. "I can't stand it. I can't! I must get out! All these weeks I've been waiting for news from England... waiting for a letter, a cable... hoping that my father..." She broke off, shaking her head. "Oh, but you wouldn't understand."

"I WOULDN'T understand?" Again Francis laughed that mocking, empty laugh. "Don't you suppose I've known that you're waiting for



"I'm going to get through!" she shrieked. "Some way I'm going to get through!" She flung open the door...

a cable from your father? Do you think I'm blind?" Levison snapped. "You sent for him because you wanted to go back to England. Well, m'dear, I'm afraid you'll have to make up your mind to stay here. There's not a chance of getting out. No, you'll have to live up to those pretty speeches you made in Vienna about sticking to the end, and so on."

"I would have stuck to the end, Isabel protested, her eyes reproachful. "You shan't say I

haven't been fair, that I haven't done my bit."

"Why shouldn't you be fair?" Levison flamed. "Do you think I'd be here now if it wasn't for you?"

"I don't understand," Isabel faltered.

"You don't understand," Levison mimicked nastily. "You don't understand that if it hadn't been for you I shouldn't have been kicked out of the diplomatic service? That's why I left. I had to have money... money for you to waste. Well, I got it... from the French Government. They told me I'd not be welcome in England... after that I had some friends in the diplomatic circles here. I thought I might be able to make some money through them... money to supply your demands... your luxuries... your gay entertainments! Did you think I could provide them on my income?"

Isabel stared in bewilderment, hearing yet scarcely comprehending the meaning of Levison's words.

Her head felt dull and heavy; her temples were throbbing painfully. She knew that she was gasping, staring wide-eyed, and she couldn't stop it. Francis had turned dishonest, to get money... money for her. He had ruined his future... for her. Sacrificed his career... for her. It was horrible... horrible!

"Why didn't you tell me?" she asked. "I might have changed my way of living. You never asked me to live simply."

"I didn't say anything before because I was too foolish," he flared, his tone defiant. "I was afraid I might lose you. And now, since my financial condition's changed your one thought is of getting away!"

Isabel drew back as though she had been struck. Then she jumped to her feet, her eyes blazing.

"THAT'S not true!" she cried. "It's not true! When I sent for my father I asked him to go to Robert for me. I wanted to see my baby... just once. That was all I wanted. Is that criminal? I can't stand being kept away from him like this!"

"Yes, so you've informed me time and time again!" Levison shouted.

Above the sound of their raised voices came the heavy booming of the guns.

"My God! The bombardment!" Levison's voice was high and strangled. He rushed to the little, deep-set window and looked out. "Why don't they surrender!" He shouted, panic-stricken. "Do they want to see innocent people killed? Innocent lives destroyed?"

"Innocent lives destroyed!" Without realizing it Isabel was repeating the words, whispering them to herself. Her white face was a tragic mask in the candle light. "Innocent lives



But even as they watched, the child's breathing became more labored. The doctor bent closer, waiting, listening . . .



destroyed! My life . . . without seeing him . . . just once. I can't! I must!"

"I'm going to get through!" she shrieked. "Some way I'm going to get through!" She flung open the door. She was gone.

Levison was out on the street, running. Ahead of him he could just make out the slight figure. A violent explosion. A wall beside him trembled violently. A shower of bricks and stones and loose mortar fell all about him. Another explosion! And still another!

He had almost reached her. He was stretching out his hand to snatch at the flying cape. The pavement rose suddenly in mid-air. Came a thundering storm of flying missiles. A hot flash of pain! Darkness!

### Chapter XVIII

SHE was in a narrow little room, on a narrow little convent cot. The Sister was gathering together the strips of bandages and piling them on a tray to be taken out.

And there was Doctor Le Blanc, the French doctor who had spoken so kindly to her whenever he had come to the dressing station where she had worked.

"My colleagues and I," he began, addressing Isabel, "have decided that it is better that you should know the truth about your injury. The optical nerve does not respond to treatment."

Slowly Isabel turned to look at the speaker. "You mean," she said huskily, "that eventually I will be . . . blind?"

"I am afraid so." The doctor shook his head. "Blind!" Again Isabel whispered the word.

"How—how soon will that be?"

"That is difficult to say, Madame," the doctor

answered. "Complete rest and quiet in a semi-darkened room is, of course, necessary. That is the only advice we can offer at present."

Isabel took a deep breath. "Thank you, Doctor," she said quietly, "but I'm afraid what you advise is impossible. If . . ." her voice faltered for an instant, and then she went on bravely: "if I am never to see again, there is something I must do. Someone . . . someone I must see, before . . . before it is too late."

"Where, Madame?" the doctor questioned.

"In England. I must go to England."

"If you undertake such a journey," he said sharply, "I cannot be responsible for what may happen."

Isabel smiled faintly. "But I am not afraid."

Now, life for her was almost finished. Only one more thing for her to do. And after that . . . nothing. With a short sigh that was partially one of relief she faced the enigmatical future. Only one more thing to do. Idly her hand strayed to the bosom of her coarse, regulation nightgown. Her fingers clutched at her breast in a convulsive spasm. The chamois bag! It was gone.

Trembling, she began a search of the cot, feeling beneath her pillow. Her diamonds! The only possession she had which would take her to England. And they were gone.

As she tried to pull herself up to a sitting position, the door opened and Doctor Le Blanc entered.

"You musn't try to sit up yet," he cautioned.

"Doctor! What happened? I want to know. When I came here did they find a little chamois bag around my neck? It was very valuable!" In her anxiety, Isabel seized the physician's arm, clutching impetuously at him.

"There, there, my lady," he said soothingly.

"Your diamonds are all right. They are safe."

"Oh!" Isabel breathed a long sigh of relief.

"Thank you."

"How did I get here?" she asked.

"You were found in the street by some of the Sisters, Madame," the doctor told her. "Evidently you were in the bombardment and were struck by a heavy piece of timber. It had pinned you to the ground, and you were unconscious for days. The Germans have taken the city. I came here one day and identified you. And your husband, Madame," he said gently. "Monsieur Levison. I also identified him. But I am sorry . . ." Again he hesitated.

"He . . . he's dead?"

"Yes, Madame."

There was a silence. Isabel stared at the grey wall in front of her. Francis was dead.

"If I can be of any assistance," the doctor was saying. "I know that you have been deeply troubled. Please believe me, Madame, I have no wish to pry into your affairs. But in your delirium you talked a great deal."

"Did I talk about England?" Isabel questioned.

The doctor nodded.

"Then you understand why I must go to England?" she asked the doctor.

The man nodded. "I understand."

"What do you think about . . . about my eyes? How long will I have my sight?"

The physician waited a moment before answering. Then: "I am afraid that what the Prussian doctors said was true, Madame. If you exert yourself, if you should pass through any great emotional crisis, you would undoubtedly go blind immediately."

"How soon may I leave the convent?"

"In a week, if you like. If you could find some place where you might rest . . ."

"No, Monsieur," Isabel shook her head. "You understand why it is that I must return to England immediately. I must see my baby before . . . before . . ."

"Yes, yes!" The doctor patted the hand that pulled at the coverlet. "I can make arrangements for your passage, if you wish it. That might facilitate matters a little."

"Oh, doctor, if you would!" Isabel exclaimed.

"I'm afraid I know very little about matters of business. I hate to trouble you so much, but I have no one . . . no one to help me," she said simply. "I am in need of money. Could you . . . could you take my diamonds and . . . and . . . well, get me money enough to take me to England?"

"I shall be very glad to attend to everything for you, Madame," he said, bowing formally.

### Chapter XIX

WHILE Isabel prepared for the journey, dispatching a letter to Joyce, and waited impatiently for the doctor to conclude the arrangements, all unknown to her, another sick bed was being watched over anxiously.

In the nursery at East Lynne, William lay in his crib, his breath coming in short, harsh gasps. Beside him sat the doctor. He had diagnosed the case as pneumonia. Now, if he were not mistaken, the crisis had arrived.

At the head of the crib was Cornelia, her brows puckered in a frown. Carlyle was beside her, white-faced, his eyes red from lack of sleep and constant vigils. Barbara was beside him, and her face, too, showed signs of the strain they were all undergoing. Joyce waited, too.

"In a week, if you like. If you could find some place where you might rest . . ."

Isabel's heart throbbed so loudly that she felt certain the departing visitor must have heard it.





But even as they watched, the child's breathing became more labored. A half hour passed. The doctor bent closer, waiting, listening. The breath caught, choked, loosed, and then began to come more easily. Another half hour. The doctor leaned back, and he, too, was breathing easier. The crisis was past.

"He'll be all right, now," he spoke encouragingly. "If he awakens during the night, continue the treatments as I have explained them to you. Above all, avoid draughts or any sudden change in temperature. I shall return in the morning."

"Yes, sir," Joyce bobbed. As the doctor stepped into the carriage he did not notice the figure that slipped along a garden path leading to the balcony and the long windows of the drawing room. He picked up the reins and started the horses briskly down the drive as the figure sheltered itself in the thick shadows of the bushes. Isabel waited, her heart throbbing so loudly that she felt certain the visi-

tor must have heard it. But the carriage passed on.

She could hear the little trickling sound of running water. That was the ravine. She paused on the bridge, thinking of the dark, craggy depths below.

From the drawing room windows came a shaft of light. As she crept closer, she could see Robert... and there in his arms, was Barbara Hare.

She watched, without a flare of jealousy, rejoicing in his happiness, that warmed her through and through.

"I'm so sorry, dear," Barbara was saying. "It's been most trying for you. I feel as anxious about William as if he were my own child."

Isabel couldn't hear the words, but she could see their lips moving; see Robert tenderly kiss the woman in his arms. And she was glad. Dodson came to lock up for the night.

Isabel heard the chink of the bolts as they were slipped into place; heard the key turn in the lock. Then she made her way along the path that led to the rear of the dwelling, to the servants' entrance.

The tall old clock in the hall chimed out twelve mellow strokes. As the musical tones died away, leaving the house to the stillness of the night, the door of the nursery opened gently. Joyce thrust her head out of the opening and looked up and down the corridor. The oil lamp at the end was burning low. The other doors, up and down the passageway, were closed. The woman stood still for a few minutes, then stepped quietly outside, closing the door behind her.

Down the hall she went, moving slowly toward the stairs in the back, her footfalls making no sound. About midnight, her ladyship had said in her letter, and she would be waiting at the servants' entrance! Her hat had used to be the mistress of East Lynne waiting at the servants' entrance! A crying shame! Joyce declared to herself, shaking her head.

NOISELESSLY Joyce went through the pantry, feeling her way along the narrow hallway that led to an outer door. She slid back the bolt and chain that made for added protection against intruders. Cautiously she opened the door. The night was as black as ink. Then a soft rustle greeted her ears, and a hand was reaching to touch her.

"Is it you, milady?" Joyce whispered. "Yes, Joyce, it's I. Oh, Joyce... Joyce!" A little tremor of relief, of gladness, filled Isabel's voice. "How is he? How is my baby?"

"Sh! milady," Joyce counseled. "Master William has been ill but he's better now. It was pneumonia, but the crisis is over. But your ladyship mustn't disturb him, the doc-

tor says, an' he'll sleep all through the night."

"Oh, I'll not disturb him, Joyce," Isabel promised. "Just let me stay through the night with him, and I'll go away at dawn."

"Yes, milady. If your ladyship will hold on to my hand an' be careful of the stairs," Joyce took Isabel's hand and went ahead, guiding her through the pantry and up the back stairway. Her own rooms, where once she had lived. It was... it was just like coming home again.

She stumbled a little as she tried to step over the threshold into the nursery, and Joyce caught her arm.

"Take my hand, Joyce," Isabel faltered. "I... I don't see as well as I used to."

Joyce, a little startled, stared briefly at her mistress, and then quickly dropped her eyes. Something had happened to her ladyship! But she made no comment; merely took the girl's hand and led her over to the crib, beside which a night lamp burned.

"There he is, milady, sleepin' peaceful an' quiet."

"Joyce," Isabel motioned to the woman. "Bring me a chair, please, so that I can sit here beside him."

"Yes, milady." Quietly Joyce pulled forward the heavy armchair and arranged it beside the crib. "Let me help you." Deftly she removed Isabel's cape and hat. "Why your clothes are wet through. 'I'll get a dish of tea for you. You must have somethin' hot."

"No, don't bother, Joyce. I'm quite all right. I don't want anything. I'll just sit here beside you. We musn't wake him."

Joyce nodded. "I've been sleepin' here at nights with him, milady," Joyce pointed to a couch along one side of the room. "When you're tired, you can lay down there."

"I won't be tired," Tired! Isabel thought. Tired after all these long months of waiting! She could sit here forever, and never grow tired.

"You go to sleep, Joyce," Isabel settled herself in the chair, her hand resting on the white counterpane of the crib. "I'll look after Master William, and if there's anything he wants, I'll wake you."

"Thank you, milady," Joyce bobbed and went to the couch. She settled herself for the nightly vigil.

## Chapter XX

HOW natural it seemed to be sitting here, Isabel reflected dreamily. This was her home. And her baby was asleep in the crib beside her. The little face she had dreamed of night after night was here, where she could touch it. Those fingers that had so often curled round her own, were half shut in the moist, pink palms of the chubby hands. Quickly, but with the lightest, most delicate



For one long moment he held her close. Her eyes widened...

touch, she placed her hand over the baby fist. William moved his head and turned restlessly. Isabel leaned closer, trying to soothe him. Slowly his eyes began to open. He mustn't be disturbed; he mustn't be awakened, Isabel remembered Joyce's words. She bent over him, peering for one lingering moment into his blue eyes. Then she began to hum softly the song that she had sung to him evening after evening... the song Robert had loved.

*"When other lips... and other hearts  
Their tales of love shall tell..."*

The child stirred again. But his eyes began to close. His head rolled to a comfortable position. Gently stroking the soft, clinging curls, Isabel crooned the melody.

*"Of days that have as happy been  
And you'll remember me...  
And you'll remember... you'll ree-  
member me."*

The child slept. Joyce dozed fitfully. Isabel sat, her hands folded in her lap, watching... watching.

Her mind wandered back once more to the first evening when she had met Robert. She thought of St. Paul's Cathedral and the way the sun coming through the stained glass windows had made the marble floor alive with rainbow colors. She had walked up the nave on Robert's arm.

A VISION rose before her of the long drive to East Lynne. Beside her, her hand in his, was Robert. They were coming home.



She could touch the little face she had dreamed of night after night!

Oh, to come home again in Robert's arms! To know love and safety and all that was good in the world. But that was past. And yet, that strange feeling came to her again, that somehow she would never want to cry out, never desire anything more.

She bent a little closer to look at the baby's face. The light was growing so dim. The face was blurred so that she could scarcely see it.

Very quietly Joyce arose from the couch and pulled back the draperies.

"I'm sorry, milady," she whispered, "but you must be goin'! It's daylight."

Isabel opened her great, deep eyes. "Is it, Joyce?" she asked softly.

For a moment Joyce stood there, stunned. Now she knew it! Something was terribly wrong. She should have known it last night. . . . it was her ladyship's eyes, that it was, that was so queer. She was going blind! She was blind now! Joyce choked back a cry of amazement. That must be it. Swiftly she passed her hand across the girl's line of vision. There was no blinking, no motion of the eyeballs.

"Oh, milady!" The startled exclamation broke through Joyce's guarded lips. "Oh! You . . . you're . . ." She couldn't say it!

"Yes, Joyce," Isabel nodded slowly. "It came in the night as I looked at him. It's all right. His face was the last thing I shall ever see. It will always be there before me, in my heart and in my mind."

"Please, Joyce," she murmured, holding out her hand. "Just once more . . . let me touch him . . ."

The tears rising to her eyes, Joyce took the thin, white hand and gently guided it to the baby's soft cheek. The fingers ran lightly over the child's forehead, and then dropped. Isabel rose from her chair, feeling for the back to steady herself.

"My hat . . . and cape," she requested. As she dressed Isabel, Joyce heard footsteps in the corridor.

"Good morning, Joyce," It was Carlyle, already dressed, and still tired and sleepless. "How is he?" He pushed open the door to look in at the sleeping child. But it was the figure standing beside the chair that arrested his attention. Consternation and anger overspread his face.

"How dare you come here!" His voice was very low, but firm. He turned to Joyce. "Are you responsible for this?" he demanded.

"Please don't blame her," Isabel interrupted, realizing now what had happened. "I wanted to see my baby. I have seen him. I shall never annoy you again." With a steady step she started across the room.

Joyce rushed to her mistress, taking her arm and leading her past Carlyle into the corridor. "Joyce!" Carlyle followed them, closing the

door of the nursery behind him. "Come here!"

"I'll be all right," Isabel whispered, "Go." Hesitating, Joyce finally went to her master, standing before him, her mouth set in purposeful determination.

"You are discharged!"

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," Joyce retorted, "But I'm leavin'. I don't understand how anyone could be as cruel an' heartless as you are."

"If you'll excuse me for sayin' it, sir," Joyce was hurrying on anxiously, "It's you that's responsible for what's happened to her. She never did do what you accused her of doin'. She loved you too much. If she hadn't loved you, do you suppose she could've put up with the life she had to live in this house? The cruel treatment of Miss Cornelia? This house was a hell for her, sir, an' I don't mind sayin' it!"

Joyce took another breath and went on. "But she never did nothin' wrong, that she didn't. An' if you live a thousand years you'll never have anyone love you like she loved you. An' you sendin' her away, now that she's alone an' blind!"

Blind! Isabel blind! Carlyle frowned. Was it possible? He could scarcely believe it, and yet Joyce's words rang true. What if he had been wrong? What if all that Joyce had said were right? And she was going away . . . blind? No . . . no . . . impossible! He turned and fled down the stairs, across the hall and out of the door.

He must tell her . . . tell her . . .

FOR the first time in her life Isabel knew which way she intended to turn.

"Isabel! Isabel! Isabel!" She could hear Robert calling to her. She must go on.

She fled across the bridge, around the stony pathway. She stumbled. She was falling, falling, like the water, falling over the stones into the ravine below.

With a cry of horror Carlyle ran across the bridge, ran down the flight of stone steps. He dropped to his knees beside the girl and lifted her in his arms. For one long moment he held her close. Her eyes widened; seemed to be staring up into his face.

"Isabel!" he whispered, his voice hoarse and trembling. "I . . . I understand. Forgive me."

Her lips parted in a trembling wistful smile. Her eyelids fluttered briefly, and then were still. Slowly her body relaxed in his arms. The smile died on her face.

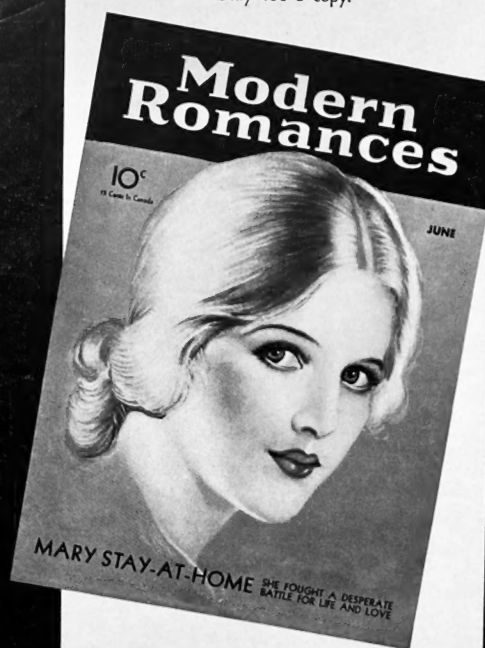
How long he knelt there, holding that cold form in his arms, Carlyle didn't know. At last, dazed and shaken, he lifted the body and carried it up the rocky stairway back to East Lynne. He lifted the still, silent figure a little higher in his arms and stepped over the threshold.

Isabel had come home.

THE END

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